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CAPTAIN  
JOSEPH WIGGINS

HENRY JOHNSON



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JOSEPH WIGGINS







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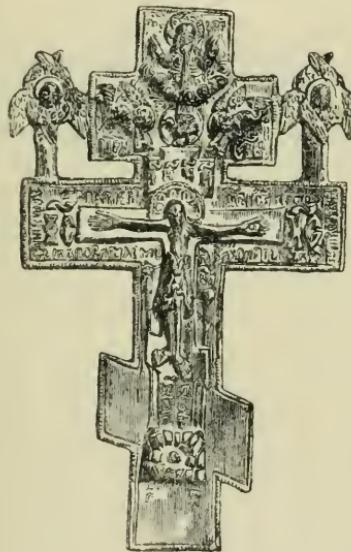
# THE LIFE AND VOYAGES OF JOSEPH WIGGINS, F.R.G.S.

MODERN DISCOVERER OF  
THE KARA SEA ROUTE TO SIBERIA  
BASED ON HIS JOURNALS & LETTERS

BY HENRY JOHNSON

AUTHOR OF "THE EXPLOITS OF MYLES STANDISH,"  
"BOOK OF HEROES," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



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“Endurance is the crowning quality,  
And patience all the passion of great hearts ;  
These are their stay.”—J. RUSSELL LOWELL.



## PREFACE

“I HAVE a prejudice about book-writing, for I think a man has no occasion to write of his deeds and doings until he is on the point of finishing his work. Then, when he has nothing else to do, he may sit down and detail the labours of his life.”

This was the opinion of Captain Wiggins, expressed in the course of a lecture in Sunderland in 1895. Yielding to the urgent wishes of many friends, he fully intended to write some day an account of his “deeds and doings.” But the period of leisure never came to him; he died in harness, and therefore the literary records of adventurous British seamen lack a volume which could not have failed to be a realistic and vivid autobiography.

All who knew Captain Wiggins personally, including friends in Russia and Siberia, and all who followed his brave efforts in Arctic seas and in Russian territory, will agree that a life like his demands a literary memorial. The present volume is an attempt to give effect to that conviction.

The Captain left a large number of papers, consisting of journals of his voyages, hundreds of letters received from various correspondents interested in his projects, as well as copies of important letters from his own hand, and many documents of other kinds. In making use of this abundant material, every opportunity has been taken of allowing the Captain to speak for himself. A great number of passages are from his own pen.

My hearty thanks are due to many kind helpers. I am indebted to Mrs R. E. Wemyss, the daughter of Sir Robert Morier, for permission to make use of her father's letters; to Lady H. M. Stanley, for permission to print a letter from the renowned African explorer; to Madame Olga Novikoff, Miss Annie E. Ridley, and Mrs J. K. Lyal, for valuable information and suggestions; to Mr Henry Cooke, late Commercial Agent at Moscow for the Board of Trade, and previously British Vice-Consul at Archangel, for information on the present aspects of the northern trade-route question, and to other persons for help in the solution of various queries.

For the loan of photographs and other illustrative matter I am indebted to Mr Charles L.

W. Gardiner, of Lympstone, Devon, one of the Captain's warmest and most disinterested supporters; Mr Joseph T. Sewell, of Whitby, brother of Mr Philip Sewell, the naturalist, who accompanied Captain Wiggins on one of his voyages; Mr J. Deans, of Sunderland; the proprietors of the *Illustrated London News*; and to the Rev. J. H. Ritson, M.A., Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, who has recently travelled across Siberia.

But my thanks are chiefly due to the legal representative of Captain Wiggins for placing the Captain's papers at my disposal, and for unremitting services throughout the preparation of this book.

In the opinion of Sir Robert Morier, Captain Wiggins was "a great historical man"; in the opinion of a leading London journal, he is "worthy to be placed beside Hawkins and Frobisher." This biographical sketch will not have fulfilled its purpose should it fail to make clear to its readers the simple justice of such statements.

HENRY JOHNSON.

LONDON, September, 1907.



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# JOSEPH WIGGINS

## CHAPTER I

### FROM APPRENTICE TO SHIOPWNER

Parentage of Joseph Wiggins—Coaching days, and the railway invasion—Nelson coachmen at the “Bull Inn,” Whitechapel—Dickens at the “Bull”—Memories of Bury St. Edmunds—Schooldays of Wiggins—Bound apprentice to a shipowner—His brothers and sisters—Hardships at sea—Mate of his ship—Master at twenty-one—Captain of the *Victoria*—Becomes a shipowner—Appointed Examiner in Navigation at Sunderland—Elected Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society—Mrs Wiggins—Friendship with Carl Rosa—Religious and philanthropic work—A true gentleman.

JOSEPH WIGGINS—born at Norwich on September 3, 1832—might have become a flourishing coach-proprietor, had not the railway invasion swept the coaches from the turnpike roads of England, calling forth from their owners stern denunciations of the ruinous advancement of science.

Not only his father—also named Joseph—but his two uncles as well, drove some of the celebrated Nelson coaches, which ran from Norwich and other places to London. The Nelson firm consisted of Mrs Ann Nelson and her three sons. Their headquarters were at the “Bull Inn,” 25 Aldgate

High Street, Whitechapel. Her son Robert had quarters at the “*Belle Sauvage*,” Ludgate Hill, and drove the *Defiance* to Exeter. Mrs Nelson treated her coachmen and guards with the consideration to which they were undoubtedly entitled. A comfortably-furnished room was reserved for their sole use at the “Bull,” and bad luck to the stranger who dared to step across the threshold. On one occasion, at least, the regulations were relaxed, for Charles Dickens contrived to gain admittance, to the mutual entertainment of guest and hosts, whilst the incidents and perils of the Norwich road were fully and humorously discussed.

Coaching must have been highly lucrative, especially to a firm with a large rolling-stock and an unblemished reputation. Mrs Nelson retired with a handsome competence, leaving the reins of government to her son John, who died a wealthy man, at a good age, in 1868, having doubtless taken the precaution to invest his savings to considerable advantage.

Mrs Nelson, we are told, was “a very masterful woman,” and consequently, it is not surprising that the three Wiggins brothers quarrelled with her—or she with them—and decided to start business on their own account. They became the owners of the *Wonder*, the *Little Wonder*, the *Rival*, and one or two other coaches, and gained distinction in their calling, by being the first to establish the system of running between Norwich and London in one day. A coach started at either end; they

met at Bury St. Edmunds, where the drivers exchanged places, and went straight on to their respective destinations. One of the brothers created a sensation in December 1842, by setting off from Norwich with his Christmas load, driving a team of six greys, "managed in a style which was never before attempted by any coachman on the road."

When Joseph Wiggins, junior, was six years old he went with his parents to live at Bury St. Edmunds. Before leaving Norwich, his father was presented by friends and patrons with a silver cup as a testimony of respect. One of the most vivid recollections of the son, remaining with him to the end of life, was a ride on his father's coach to the great city.

Joseph Wiggins took the "Dog" Inn, at Bury, renaming it "The Eastern Counties Railroad Tavern," whence his coaches started for the south, competing with the *Phenomena*, owned by John Nelson and others. It seems odd that, in renaming his hostelry, he should have paid so much deference to the "railway fiend," which was gradually creeping towards Bury, intent on robbing coach-proprietors of their livelihood. His action seemed like offering a sop to Cerberus. The fact is he was under a slight obligation to the "fiend," with whom he had formed a temporary alliance.

The coaching fraternity were deprived of their vocation gradually. When the railway reached Brentwood, the Company contracted with the brothers to carry passengers to this place, where

the coach, with its living load, was transferred to a truck, and jolted by rail to London. At Shoreditch terminus the coach was removed from the truck, and drawn, by a team in readiness, to its destination—the “Green Dragon,” Bishopsgate Street, and sometimes other coaching inns. A similar arrangement was carried out when the iron road reached Colchester; but when it touched Ipswich the passengers from Norwich left the coach and entered the train.

This enterprising competitor of Mrs Nelson died at Bury in December 1843, leaving his widow and eight children only slenderly provided for. Mrs Wiggins returned to Norwich with her family, and at least one of her children, Joseph, left Bury with keen reluctance and regret. The ancient place, with its associations, going back to the beginning of English history, with its rich pastures and cornfields, had won a warm place in the lad’s heart, which was never usurped as the years passed on. The following fragment, in praise of Bury, was found amongst the Captain’s papers, evidently written after he had crossed many seas, and reflecting, in some degree, his love of nature and his descriptive powers.

“There is another old town of dear remembrance to me—Bury St. Edmunds. It has grown up round the old Abbey, now in ruins, and is surrounded by park-like scenery. Oh, the happy hours which I have spent, wandering about—in and out among the ruins of the Abbey, in the

ancient churches, and among the ivy-clad tombs in a secluded spot, where now rest my father and my little sister! Not far from this dear spot is the little wicket-gate, leading into the Abbey grounds, and to the running stream, meandering along to pour out its waters, in turbulent fashion, through the quaint arches of the Abbey walls.

“Many and many a time have I made my way through the grounds, into old Eastgate Street, and then away through green fields and pastures towards Fornham and other hamlets; along the banks of the quiet streamlet, across meadow and mead, over hedgerow and dyke, through glen and through glade—the sweet flowers and grasses underfoot, the lark overhead pouring forth his song, as ‘From his light wing the bright dew he is shaking’—by my side Crib, trustiest of companions, joyously barking.

“So, through fence-gap and turnstile, till the dusty road was reached, just in time to hear the echoing horn of the red-coated guard of the Newmarket coach, *Little Wonder*. Then the coachman shook his reins, as he dashed past with his high-mettled horses, just to test my running powers. Then the bounding spurt of nimble feet across the dusty track of flashing wheels, the click of hand on hindmost handle, the spring to the step, the grasp of the horny hand of the good-natured guard, as he helped the bound to the hinder seat; the merry twinkle of the coachee’s eye, as, with backward glance, he assured

himself of my safety ; the crack of his long whip, urging his steeds to a smart canter ; the swaying coach, the merry horn keeping time and tune with rattling hoofs, as they sped on over hill and through hamlet, across bridges and brooks—‘on and on, with bugle and song,’ till the tortuous streets of the quiet old town were threaded, and the doorstep ‘of the old house at home’ was reached, with the welcome of tired old Crib as we touched the ground. Oh ! the joys of childhood—how bright they seem, and how dear to memory !”

Joseph had been taught in two or three schools, and now, on returning to his birthplace, he became a pupil at Farnell’s School, in Theatre Street. He was a bright, affectionate, good-natured boy, self-willed and determined, though unselfish. His attractive qualities won for him many friends, and amongst them was one, described by the Captain as “a lad with curly hair, called Jarrold.” This friend was Thomas Jarrold, afterwards a member of the well-known firm of publishers of that name.

When fourteen years of age he had to choose a vocation, and his choice fell on a seafaring life. He was apprenticed for five years to his uncle, Joseph Potts, a shipowner, of Sunderland. With the benedictions and wise counsels of his mother, he set off by coach for Lynn, to join a brig trading to the Baltic and South America. His first captain was James Horan, afterwards the junior partner in the firm of Anderson & Horan, of Sunderland.

Joseph Wiggins’ mother died in 1847. His

eldest brother went to Australia, and was never heard of again. Two brothers were lost at sea, another enlisted in the Horse Guards, and his brother Robert adopted a sea-faring life, obtained a master's certificate, and afterwards co-operated with Joseph in the Siberian enterprise. Two sisters died, and a third is still living—the only survivor of the family.

The lot of the sailor-boy, in the days when Joseph Wiggins began his roving career, was far harder than it is to-day. Humane regulations, issued by the Board of Trade, have vastly improved the condition both of the apprentice and the able-bodied seaman. Joseph had his share of hardship and brutal treatment, and in manhood he told his juvenile friends many a rousing story, not only of ill-usage, but also of adventure and narrow escapes from death.

At the expiration of his apprenticeship he was appointed mate of his vessel, and at the age of twenty-one was master of a ship, trading to the Mediterranean. A few years later, he passed an examination which qualified him to command a steamship, and, when only twenty-seven, he obtained the command of a steamer, the *Victoria*, of 4,000 tons, being the largest steamer of the day, the *Great Eastern* alone excepted. For his skilful handling of the *Victoria*, when aground in the Baltic whilst in charge of a pilot, and bringing her home for repairs, he received the thanks of the underwriters, and a present of £100.

The most trying and terrible experience of his seafaring life occurred in the middle of the Atlantic in 1862. In January of that year he left the Thames in command of the steamer *Spartan*, bound for Halifax and St John's, carrying several passengers and a quantity of Government stores. On February 10 the ship encountered a heavy gale and a tremendous sea. The next day, whilst all hands were engaged in taking in sails, a fearful sea broke over her, carrying everything before it, and washing overboard several of the crew, some of whom were washed on board again; but the chief mate and two men were lost. A few extracts from the Captain's report furnish a graphic and tragic picture of some of the events which followed.

“Midnight.—Blowing a hurricane. Sea running in mountains. Ship labouring frightfully. Engines working slowly and heavily. Could not keep ship's bow to sea. She lay wallowing in the trough. All things swept off deck. Cargo apparently shifting to leeward.

“12.30 A.M.—Lee decks continually under water. Found lee ports closed; with much difficulty succeeded in opening them myself. Bunker lids washed away; but managed to get them on again.

“12.50 A.M.—A fearful sea broke over ship fore and aft, carrying away both lifeboats and part of bridge, stove-in weather side of foreward house, washed off engine-room skylights and bunker lids, swamped stokehole, and put out port fire.

Engineer reported no hope of keeping in fires. Requested him to go down, and exhort his men to work. I went into forecastle and did the same to sailors, who were nearly panic-stricken. On going aft, found the whole poop-front stove-in, and saloon all destroyed, with everything in it. Enquired for passengers. Found two sitting on the poop-stairs. They informed me that Captain Hand, of the 63rd Regiment, with his wife and child, had perished. . . . No one able to keep on deck save two men lashed to the wheel.

"February 12.—Engines broke down, leaving ship at the mercy of the waves. Blowing a hurricane from N.W.; ship driving to southward in the trough of the sea." On the 13th there were six feet of water in the hold, and it was decided to throw overboard as much as possible of the cargo. The next day the ship was evidently in a sinking condition. Unless help came quickly, the ship and all on board were doomed. On the 17th there was hope of rescue, for a vessel was sighted. The *William Fotheringham*, in response to signals of distress, bore down upon the *Spartan*. The passengers and the crew were transferred from the wreck under very hazardous circumstances—a heavy swell, high wind, and semi-darkness. The rescue-ship kept near the *Spartan* for two hours, and then Captain Wiggins saw her lights go out, and the ship go down.

On her way eastward, the *William Fotheringham* had a hard fight with a succession of heavy gales,

but at last reached Havre in safety. The surviving passengers, Lieutenant W. G. Graves and Surgeon R. D. Francis, presented Captain Wiggins with a testimonial, thanking him for his attention and care while they were on board his ship, and expressing their "great admiration of the skill and courage which he displayed," adding, "Your constant endeavours to cheer your crew and inspire them with confidence, and your unwearied exertions to save the ship, are beyond all praise."

In after years Captain Wiggins took several steamers to the Mediterranean, to China, America, and the West Indies, and then became a ship-owner, commanding his own cargo vessels to various parts of the world. Thus he rose, step by step, in the comparatively short period of twenty-two years, to the top of the seafaring ladder, through his skill, energy, determination, steadiness, and upright character.

In 1866 he made the pioneer voyage in connection with a new branch of commerce—the importation of sheep from Iceland into England. Mr John Swan, of Newcastle — father of Sir Joseph Wilson Swan—in conjunction with other merchants, chartered a steamer, and Wiggins was invited to accompany her as supercargo. Plenty of sheep were obtained at a low price, but the vessel on her return journey encountered a violent storm, and such a large number of the sheep were lost that the venture proved a financial failure. The trade was afterwards carried on successfully by

others, until the late Government passed an Act prohibiting the importation of sheep, unless for immediate slaughter on arrival.

In 1868 Wiggins decided to settle on shore, and with this end in view, qualified himself as Examiner in Navigation and Seamanship for the Port of Sunderland, under the authority of the Board of Trade. His duties began on January 1, 1869, and he held the post for five years, resigning it in 1874 to undertake his first Siberian venture. In 1871 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

Those five years were the quietest and the happiest of his strenuous life. He had married, in 1861, his cousin, Miss Annie Potts, daughter of Mr Joseph Potts, of Sunderland, in whose service his seafaring life began. Of beautiful character, with a well-balanced mind and intellectual attainments, Mrs Wiggins endeared herself to all who knew her. All sorts and conditions of people formed the circle of her acquaintances and friends, who much appreciated her sage advice and her warm and ready sympathy.

Amongst the friends of Captain and Mrs Wiggins, was the famous *impressario* and "Father of English Opera," Carl Rose, who changed his name in 1871 to Rosa. The acquaintance began when Wiggins was a young captain and Carl a lad of about eleven. The former took over to Hamburg a consignment of coals for Carl's father, and was welcomed into the family home

at 21 Poolstrasse. From that time forward, the Captain, whenever he went to Hamburg—an event of frequent occurrence for several years—spent his evenings in this hospitable abode. Carl's first visit to England—during his student days at Leipzig Conservatorium—was on the occasion of the Captain's marriage, and this visit was followed by others in after years.

The Captain and his wife, as well as his uncle and father-in-law, Mr Potts, were greatly interested in the promising young musician, and gladly helped him in various ways until he obtained a footing in this country. Rose was deeply impressed with their kindness, and his letters breathe not only a grateful sense of benefits received, but also warm affection for Mr and Mrs Wiggins. In March 1866, he made his first appearance before a large audience in England, as violin solo-player, at the Crystal Palace. Two months later, when hard at work practising, in view of a tour with Mr Bateman in the United States, he was summoned to Hamburg through his father's illness, which proved incurable. He had to exchange violin-practice for "taking in coals on the Elbe," and counting-house duties. "When I was so very happy near you," he writes to Mrs Wiggins, "just a few weeks ago, I did not know what a terrible blow was in store for me." "How I shall have strength to practise for my new tour, I do not know. I try all in my power to look a little after the business, so that it may not suffer too much.

What a change from the happy time I spent with you!"

Mrs Wiggins tried to console and cheer him, and to persuade him to believe that his father's sufferings, permitted by a beneficent Being, had a beneficent end in view. But Rose, almost angry, refused to accept this solution; nevertheless, he applied himself courageously to his uncongenial duties. Fame beckoned to him from England and America, but he stuck to the coal-wharf and the drudgery of the counting-house as long as needful. "I have taken the business completely in hand, and try to make the best of it, and I have found the greater the difficulties seem to get, the calmer one becomes, and the more strength and desire I feel to overcome them." The prospect of the American tour seemed to be fading away. "The doctors do not know in the least how long he has to suffer. With the business and my violin, I have more to do than I want, as my greatest desire now is to be at the side of my dear father. You cannot imagine how painful it is to see spring in its beauty—everything beautiful, everybody happy, and our house in such misery; but we try to be as cheerful and hopeful with him as possible, and our whole existence in his presence is nothing but a lie. Father and mother send their best love to you all."

Release came at last, and Rose, after this hard discipline, was able to fulfil his musical engagements. His brilliant, but too short, career ended in 1889. Captain Wiggins visited Hamburg for

the last time in April 1905, when, writing home, he recalled old associations. "How one's feelings and memories go back to the long past, when I used to be every night with the dear boy Carl, and his father and mother, at their quaint old house! The charm of Hamburg is gone, for those dear and only friends in this city and country are all passed away, never to return."

During the five years of his life at Sunderland, Captain Wiggins showed much practical interest in religious and philanthropic work. He took a prominent part in establishing the Young Men's Christian Association of the town, and was most popular with the young men. He started a boating club in connection with the Association, and presented it with the first boat. In many other ways, also, he directed energetic effort towards advancing the welfare and progress of the town of his adoption. He won the highest praise from the local Marine Board for the manner in which he conducted his official duties, and all who had any business transactions with him were able to bear testimony to his strict integrity and straightforward dealing.

Though trained in a rough-and-ready school, he possessed and set forth the instincts of the true gentleman, a characteristic conspicuous in all his relationships, attested by his correspondence from this period to the end of his life, sometimes remarkably, in circumstances of stress and strain, irritation and disappointment.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SIBERIAN PROBLEM

The Captain worried by his "sea-legs"—Studying maps—Ice reported to block the ocean-way to Siberia—Cost of overland transit of merchandise—Vast extent and resources of Siberia—The population—Aborigines—Exiles as colonists—A "Land of Goshen" running to waste—Russian traders of the sixteenth century—Adventurers into the Kara Sea—The three channels to the Sea—The Captain forms a theory—Wants experience in the "habits" of ice—Decides to go to the north-east.

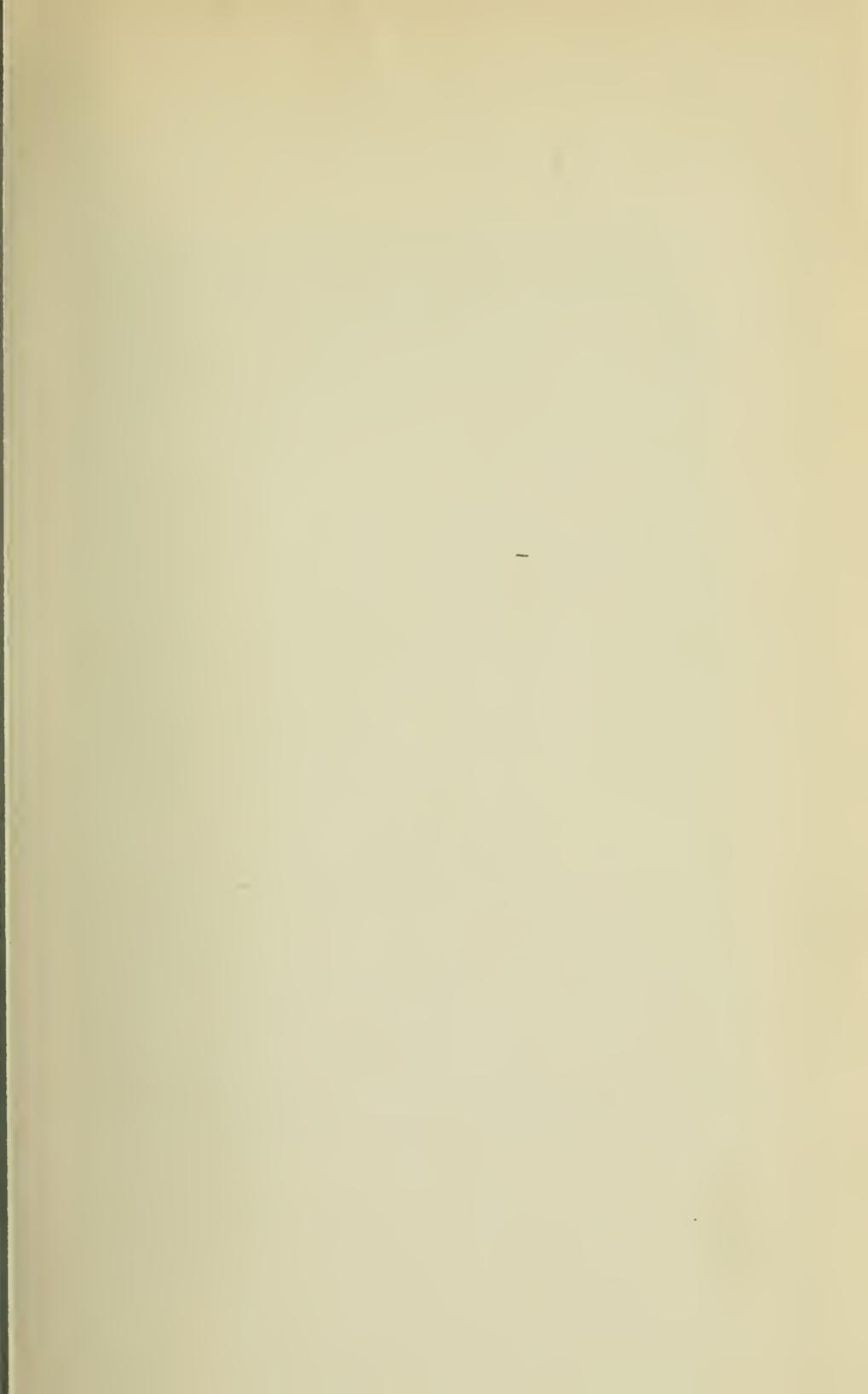
CAPTAIN WIGGINS was not quite at his ease in the somewhat monotonous routine of examining candidates for certificates of masters and mates. His "sea-legs" worried him. Though perfectly happy in the home-circle, yet he felt that a land-lubber's vocation was not congenial. How could it be, to a man who was "every inch a sailor"?

Sitting in his office, the walls lined with maps, his spare moments were often occupied with the study of one particular map—that of the Arctic Regions. It was the eastward portion that specially attracted his attention, and years before this period of his life, he had examined, with ever-increasing curiosity, the same bit of the globe's surface.

He saw, stretching eastward, from a few miles of the North Cape to Behring's Strait, a long, uneven, jagged shore, appropriating about  $150^{\circ}$  of longitude, which outlined the northern limits of the Russian Empire. He saw several great rivers, about 3,000 miles in length, crossing Siberia, and falling into the Arctic Ocean. He knew that the mouths of these rivers were commonly reported to be closed to navigation by the presence of ice, or, if navigable for a few weeks in the summer, the adventurous mariner would run serious risk among the huge ice-floes, and probably never pick his way up the rivers in safety. Some maps which he consulted showed perpetual ice along the shore, and away to the north, from long.  $45^{\circ}$  E. to Behring's Strait. The leg-shaped islands of Nova Zembla were nearly encased with ice, and the Kara Sea was a blank with regard to open water.

Then the Captain sought for information about the country watered by these rivers. He found that merchandise from Europe for the people of Siberia had to be carried overland at great expense, and the riches of Siberia itself were scarcely developed at all, not so much from lack of labour as from the difficulties, expense, and slowness of conveying produce by caravan and sledge. The cost of transit of a ton of merchandise from the Siberian frontier to St Petersburg was about £4 or £5.

The resources of Siberia — precious metals,





Largest city of Siberia. Population, 76,000. Polish Church in foreground.

IRKUTSK.  
[To face p. 17.

wheat, timber, and furs — were almost inexhaustible. They were spread over an area of more than 5,000,000 English square miles, exceeding the area even of Canada by about 1,000,000 miles. Gold, silver, copper, graphite, and other metals, were to be found in abundance over vast districts. The search for gold, so far, had been almost entirely confined to alluvial washings. Most of this metal lay untouched and imprisoned in the quartz, because of the impracticability of transporting the heavy, crushing machinery from Europe. The wheat was the finest in the world. Rich land was left untilled because the wheat could not be brought to market. One harvest in three years, from the comparatively small area cultivated, sufficed for the wants of the population. The forests extended thousands of miles, and contained the largest kinds of trees, such as the pine, the larch, birch, and cedar, and also abounded with game and wild fruit. The fur territories included the whole of the forest zone, together with the *tundras*, or deserts, on the verge of the Arctic seas.

The Captain then made ethnological researches. The population of Siberia—about 5,000,000<sup>1</sup>—was said to consist of a variety of races—Russians, Poles, Finns, Tartars, Ostjaks, Samoyedes, and other aborigines. The native races led a nomadic life for the most part. They possessed large herds of reindeer, and gained their sustenance by hunting,

<sup>1</sup> In 1900 the population exceeded 7,894,000.

trapping, and fishing. They also traded with Russian merchants, bartering furs for articles of European manufacture. The Russian population was made up chiefly of immigrants, exiles, and the descendants of exiles. A considerable majority of exiles, when their term of banishment came to an end, preferred to remain in Siberia rather than to return to their fatherland. They settled down to agricultural pursuits, or engaged in other occupations. Newly-arrived exiles were allowed to choose their place of abode within clearly-defined limits, and were expected to maintain themselves. It often happened, when the head of a family was condemned to exile, that his wife and children and other relatives accompanied him. A new home was formed, in probably happier circumstances than the home in the land of their birth. In this way communities, villages, and towns sprang up here and there, but chiefly near the banks of the rivers, which swarmed with all kinds of fish. The Russian Government encouraged, rather than discouraged, the practice of whole families emigrating with the culprit, condemned for some political, or comparatively slight, offence, for this was one way of colonising Siberia—an object much to be desired.

The exiles comprised all social grades—counts, barons, professional men, merchants, tradesmen, and artisans. Another division of the population consisted of the inmates of the prisons, who had been convicted of serious crimes.

Such, in outline, was the result of the Captain's investigations, and the fact which, beyond all others, impressed him the most deeply was this—Siberia, the “Land of Exile,” the “Land of Darkness,” was in reality a Land of Goshen, running to waste for lack of an ocean-highway.

Amongst the books which he consulted was Wrangel's “Polar Sea,” and in it he found that Russian traders of Archangel, in the sixteenth century, were accustomed to visit the mouth of the Obi in frail boats, and barter with the natives of the Yalmal Peninsula. To accomplish this feat they had to pass into the Kara Sea. He also found out that a few English, Norwegian, Swedish, and Dutch adventurers had pushed their way into the Kara Sea between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, thus proving that at certain times the ice was no insuperable difficulty to navigation. No modern expedition, however, had ever reached the Obi and the Yenesei Rivers by the Kara Sea route.

Admiral Lutke, about the year 1840, undertook, at the instance of the Russian Government, to survey the Siberian coast, and he asserted, as the result of his experience, that a passage from the rivers through the Kara Sea to Europe was altogether impracticable. The Russian Government accepted his statement, and made no further effort to open up the northern seas.

The three channels leading from the west into the Kara Sea were the Matochkin Strait, dividing

Nova Zembla in lat.  $73^{\circ} 20'$  N.; the Waigats Straits (otherwise called the Kara Gates, or the Iron Gates, from their supposed closure by ice), on the north of Waigats Island; and the Yugor, or Pet Strait, a narrow channel between the south coast of Waigats Island and the mainland.

Having obtained all available information on the subject, which had now taken a firm grip of his thoughts, he proceeded to form a theory which, in his view, rendered the ocean-way to Siberia not only practicable, but easy.

It was known that part of the warm waters of the Gulf Stream and equatorial currents passed round the North Cape, on towards Nova Zembla. In the Captain's opinion these waters found their way into the Kara Sea through the Waigats and Pet Straits, and, working with the waters from the rivers, opened a wide track for vessels to the coast of Siberia and the river mouths.

That was the simple theory which he formed in 1869, the correctness of which he was eager to demonstrate. But there was a difficulty in the way—his lack of experience in Arctic regions. He would like to join some Polar expedition in a subordinate capacity, in order to gain practical acquaintance with the “habits” and freaks of the ice, and become initiated in the modes of battling with it. With this end in view, he corresponded with all the leading Arctic explorers and authorities of the day. Amongst them were Mr J. Lamont, who had made several voyages in the vicinity of

Nova Zembla; Commander Collinson, Captain M'Clintock, Mr B. Leigh-Smith, Captain Allen Young, Captain J. E. Davis, Commander Sherard Osborne, Mr Clements R. Markham, Dr Rae; Lieutenant Weyprecht, who had made one expedition to the North, and was preparing for another; and Lady Franklin.

He obtained much useful information in the course of this correspondence, but no opportunity presented itself for accompanying either a scientific or a sporting expedition. One of his applications was made, in 1872, to Professor Nordenskiöld, who was arranging an expedition to the north-west, and who, two years later, followed in the track of Wiggins to the north-east. He offered to join the Professor as a free-service volunteer, but the offer was declined. His final effort to gain experience was made when the rumour of an Arctic expedition, assisted by the British Government, got abroad. He was informed that only naval men would be allowed the privilege of taking part in it.

But, experience or no experience, he determined to go to the north-east, at whatever risk, even if it cost all his savings, and, resigning his official position in Sunderland, he made preparations for his venture.

## CHAPTER III

### VOYAGE OF THE *DIANA*

Chartering the *Diana*—Advice from Dr Petermann—Objects of the voyage—Stanley eager to go with the Captain—Journal of the voyage—Early difficulties—Qualities of the *Diana*—Lady Chang—Norwegian scenery—Christening party at Tromsœ—Prophets of evil at Hammerfest—Amongst the ice—Charming colouring of ice-blocks—Moored to a floe—*Diana's* prowess—In the Kara Sea—Trapped—Tragic relics on the Samoyede coast—Dodging, twisting, turning, and wriggling—“Oh, for a balloon!”—Effects of mirage—A climate for consumptives—In the Muddy Gulf—Interviewing natives—Norwegian fishing-boats—Rounding White Island—At the mouth of the Obi—Tantalising situation—Home-ward bound—Searching for the Austrian expedition—Results of the voyage—The Captain's modesty—His place among Arctic explorers—His voyage provokes emulation.

AFTER making search for a suitable vessel, the Captain chartered Mr Lamont's steamship, the *Diana*, 103 tons register, and thoroughly equipped

her, entirely at his own expense. The *Diana* had already done good service in Arctic seas when carrying her owner on sporting expeditions, and Captain Wiggins had full confidence in her suitability for the work before her.

Whilst making his preparations, he consulted Dr Augustus Petermann, of Gotha, the greatest authority of the day on Arctic science, who supplied him with a number of charts and useful information. "For ten years and more," wrote Dr Petermann, "I have urged the importance of opening the Siberian trade by the route you have in view—the Obi and the Yenesei; also in Russia there is one who is quite alive to the importance of it, for the merchant Sidoroff, in 1862, offered a prize of £2,000 to the first vessel that reached and entered the River Obi. The Norwegians, since 1869, have every year reached the Obi with their frail sailing vessels of 30 tons, but never entered it, as their object was merely fishing. . . . I think if you reached Obdorsk, on the Obi, and Brekhoffskey Island, in the Yenesei, and thus opened out a chance of new commercial routes, you would achieve a good thing, and be hailed by Russia, and perhaps more by her than any other land, as a great benefactor."

The Captain's main object in this voyage was to demonstrate the feasibility of reaching the Obi and the Yenesei through the Kara Sea. The second object was to make a search, if circumstances permitted, on the south coast of Nova

Zembla for the missing Austro-German expedition, under the command of Lieutenant Weyprecht, which had been out some two years. A quantity of provisions was put on board the *Diana*, at the cost of Mr B. Leigh-Smith, for the relief of the missing explorers.

A few days before the departure of the *Diana*, Mr H. M. Stanley, who had made the acquaintance of Captain Wiggins, expressed a strong wish to accompany him. The incident was related by the Captain himself, in 1889, at a meeting in Newcastle, over which Earl Percy presided. "I was writing to Sir William Mackinnon the other evening," said the Captain, "and mentioned that the marvellous man Stanley was again to the fore. I told him that he was probably not aware that Stanley fell in love with my idea in 1874, and desired to go out, and be, with me, the first Englishman on these rivers. I said to him: 'Stanley, if you ascend these rivers and go over Asia home, you will be the first man to do it, after the fashion of what you did in Africa.' Stanley said: 'You have the right track; if Bennett will let me go, I will go with you.' I said: 'I am nearly ready to sail. I will give you a week.' He replied: 'Three days will do. I'll telegraph.' He cabled to Bennett, and Bennett replied with the monosyllable: 'No.' Stanley sent me that telegram in a letter, with his deep regret that he could not accompany me.'"

The following is Stanley's letter :

“ LANGHAM HOTEL,  
“ LONDON, May 25, 1874.

“ JOSEPH WIGGINS, Esq.,  
“ 4 The Elms, Sunderland.

“ Dear Sir,—After telegraphing to New York for instructions, I have been unable to obtain an affirmative answer.

“ I regret it extremely, as I should have been delighted to accompany you. But I wish you heartily success, and if I am in Europe when you return successfully, no one will be prouder of your feat than,—yours gratefully,

“ HENRY M. STANLEY.”

The *Diana* left Dundee on June 3. The Captain kept a very full journal of the voyage, noting, not only meteorological changes, sun temperatures, the difficulties of progress, and the perils of ice and gales, but also incidents occurring on board, to which are added his racy comments on men and things. It is too long to reproduce in its entirety; but a few extracts will suffice to convey to the reader a general idea of the *Diana's* voyage, and to illustrate some of the Captain's characteristics.

“ June 6.—Begins with fine weather—the little *Diana* slipping along at about five and a half knots an hour. 2 A.M.—Wind veering to the south. Set sails. The propeller commenced to kick up a

great row, forcing me to the conclusion that it must be ‘on strike.’ Ran on deck, and found engineer in difficulties, for the steam-gauge had become choked. There being a fine breeze, I deemed it best to take off propeller and let him have a little rest. Set all sails, and ordered engineer to bank fires. 8 A.M.—*Diana* dancing along at the rate of seven and a half knots, ‘like an ocean-bird set free’ after her long winter’s confinement in dock. A tremendous Atlantic swell rolling in from westward, which would have caused any merchant steamer and many a yacht to roll gloriously, or, rather, ingloriously. The *Diana*, being above that sort of thing, bounds steadily on, like a bird on the wing, occasionally dipping her lee gunwale under view, after the manner of the graceful sea-gull, skimming the surface and dipping his slender wing delicately and daintily. Took an observation for latitude—the first time for some seven years—with the same old quadrant and the same old method. It seems but as yesterday since we were at the same game, the only difference being that everything feels more enjoyable now than then.

“June 7.—Strong breeze from southward. *Diana* bounding along over the rolling deep, and we are now having our fill of rope-hauling and sailorising. Towards evening wind veered to westward, with squalls. Topsails reefed close down. *Diana* is now dancing along at eight and a half knots, like a joyous maiden out for a holiday trip. 7 P.M.—Every reason to think that the wind will fly into the

north-west—things not being quite so comfortable as they are on shore generally. Poor Lady Chang moves about in an unsteady manner from one part of the ship to another, ever and anon looking up wistfully and enquiringly to her master, and occasionally taking a long and longing gaze down the cabin stairs, seeming to say: ‘That’s the place for poor me.’ But she knows it is forbidden ground, and consequently forbears. 8 P.M.—Wind veered into the north; *Diana*’s dance and gallop evidently nearly at an end. Midnight.—She is going limping along, heading for the Norway land. At midnight broad daylight; we shall now know no darkness until autumn.

“June 8. Noon.—Proceeding under steam against a strong head sea. The little craft is doing her best, or, rather, the little propeller is; for it is kicking up a fine frantic row under the cabin, racing round at the rate of 100 revolutions per minute, fairly playing a game of much ado about nothing. Still, it manages to force *Diana* to skip along—jumping *a la* polka, as it were—at times bows under. 10 P.M.—Fine, calm weather. The glorious sun has just set to the north-west in a bank of golden-fringed, jet-black clouds, enshrouding the magnificent snow-capped mountains of Norway with a mantle of intense purple and gold, worthy the art and skill of even a greater than a Turner. 2 A.M.—He again makes his appearance in the north-east, lighting up once more the sombre and weird-looking land of the Vikings with a

glorious golden hue—the snowy heights fairly glittering with the intense golden tinge. 8 A.M.—All these beauties are at once hidden from our view. The wind is in the south, and blowing fresh, with thick rain—the little craft now running along under all canvas, and the noisy little propeller at rest."

Rough weather prevailed for several days, and the *Diana* was unable to reach Tromsoe until June 14. The Captain called at this port for despatches, and to take a pilot on board for Waigats Straits. At the German Consul's he found a christening party assembled, and felt out of place, in his pilot cloth and sou'-wester, amongst ladies and gentlemen, "dressed in silks and satins, white waistcoats, and the everlasting white kids." "Being ungracious enough to decline drinking 'Sehnaps,' added to the fact that I was very tired and weary with a hard night's work, made me, I fear, but a useless intruder in that happy gathering. So, after partaking of some sweetened liquid, made for the ladies—they being the Good Templars here, it seems—and tasting some cake, and a kind of whipped eggs and sugar, I excused myself, and beat a hasty retreat."

Leaving Tromsoe on June 19, he called at Hammerfest the following day to engage a Norwegian seaman who could speak English, as interpreter to "our worthy old pilot, who cannot speak above two words of my tongue, which renders his advice and services almost useless.

I find that he believes the mouth of the Obi to be very shallow, and encumbered with shifting sandbanks, which we shall not be astonished to find. There must be a large accumulation of sediment discharged from a mighty river like the Obi, running, as it does, some 2,400 miles inland, with many tributaries. Should this be so, we shall not succeed in getting *Diana* up the Gulf. In that case, we will examine White Island and the neighbouring shores, to ascertain if a convenient harbour exists, in which large steamers could load and discharge. In the event of the Kara Sea being navigable for such steamers, the goods could be brought up and down the river by light craft constructed for the purpose."

Before leaving Hammerfest, the Captain was assured by several Norwegians that he would find it utterly impossible to enter the Kara Sea, but he was not the kind of man to be deterred from his enterprise by such discouragement.

On June 22 the *Diana* sailed from Hammerfest with a favourable wind. At noon she rounded the "weird-looking" North Cape. Fine weather, with bright sunshine, continued for three or four days. On June 26 there were signs that the ship was approaching the "battle-ground" of snow and ice. The "ominous" crow's nest was sent aloft, and poor Chang was thus deprived of her snug quarters. Henceforth she had to be content with a bread-barrel, of much smaller dimensions than her former home.

“June 27.—Sighted a small craft on our starboard beam. Hauled up to speak to her. Found her to be a small sealing sloop from Tromsoe, intending to fish. Asked captain if he had seen the land on Nova Zembla. Yes—it was about twenty miles off to the northward. This must be wrong, as our reckoning shows us about thirty to forty miles. Asked to be reported on his return. These poor little weakly-built craft seem sadly inefficient to battle with ice, and it is wonderful to think that they can, as they have often done, venture into the Kara Sea, and even circumnavigate Nova Zembla.

“June 28.—Sighted ice. I saw the white line along our port beam, and my unpractised eyes took it to mean breakers. But the mate soon pronounced it to be ice. Hauled up for it, and steered along the edge. Found it trending to N.E. Sighted a small island on our lee, bearing about east. This is one of the many small rock islands off Waigats Island, which should be in sight, but weather too hazy. 8 P.M.—Our ‘lead’ has come suddenly to an end; we had been hoping it might take us right through into the Kara Sea, but find we have been running down into a deep bight, and must now beat out. So we are thrashing away at it, under single reefed sails. Weather thick and looking dirty. The ice is somewhat heavy, but seems to be driven from the land; so we hope to find a lane along the shore. Midnight.—Very exciting

and interesting work—tacking, bearing, and hauling up, for the different floes of ice that float about in our track. *Diana* nearly succeeded in kissing a big one, but just managed to weather him by about three inches. Although the weather is thick and murky, with no sun, these majestic blocks of ice, piled one upon the other in the most fantastic manner, are tinged, when the eye obtains a clear view into the deep caverns and under the massive slabs, with the most beautiful azure blue that we have ever seen. At the surface, and just underneath the water, the tint is a charming, bright emerald-green. This contrast, combined with the delicate tints that they are fringed with, and the pure whiteness of the blocks, makes a picture of colouring that no artist could ever hope to imitate perfectly. The angles of each block are exquisitely acute. We feel entranced as we pass close to these lovely objects, and are prompted to exclaim—

“‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!  
All Thy works shall praise Thy name, in earth, and sky,  
and sea!’”

“‘O ye ice and snow, bless ye the Lord; praise Him and magnify Him for ever!’”

“We must now be inside the Straits, although we have seen nothing. Should we be right, we must be standing towards Waigats Island—at the back of it. 12.30 A.M.—Just sighted the Island, so we are really in the Kara Sea. Still, we must

not be too sanguine, for there is ice all around; but, as the wind is now off the Island and mainland, we may get a lead along. We can truly say we have been *brought in*, for we could not see to choose our own way through the intricacies of the ice, because of the hazy weather.

"June 29.—Begins dull, with showers. 2 P.M.—Closing in with land fast. Fear our lead will not take us much further, but must hope for the best. Got soundings—fifteen fathoms, sand bottom. Land quite clear of snow. Midnight.—Thick haze. Still standing along the land. Passed some Samoyede huts about 4 P.M. This is the channel that Captain Johansen and others have been up. Before entering the Straits I asked the pilot which would be the best way to go, but he knew nothing. Now that we have got here, he says it's the usual way. So, I can have no faith in his advice. We are now, for the first time since leaving Hammerfest, under steam.

"June 30.—We are moored to a large floe that is fast to some islands near the mainland. 'Landed,' for the first time in our life, on Arctic ice. The sensation was novel—a certain feeling of insecurity and oppressiveness, the latter caused, we believe, by the intense glare and heat of the sun on the snow. In fact, we never felt the sun more in our way than just then. 10 P.M.—The boat which left the ship has returned, with a small cargo of eider-ducks' eggs, some down, and three birds. The men report that they walked to

the island over much mud—about half a mile of it—and they found the island covered with eider-ducks.

“ Noon.—We have just had a severe battle among the pack-ice. We saw a good long lane opened out along the shore, and, the wind having changed to the south-east, we concluded the ice would open out from the land, and so ran down under easy sail to see how far the lane led. On getting towards the end, the wind increased to a gale, with heavy rain, and the pack was closing rapidly on to a heavy floe of shore-ice. Before we could order steam up, and haul ship out into the loosest part of the pack, we were driven down into the bight, and enclosed at once in the firm grip of the land-ice and the pack, driving with the latter rapidly, and grinding and squeezing and crushing against the hard side of the land floe.

“ All speed was made to get up steam, and all sail set, to force her through the pack, and into the open space which was provokingly close by on our port side. But poor little *Diana* lay helpless, bearing the brunt of events in a quiet manner. Steam was soon up, and now came the question, Can she force her way out? The opinion of most of the men was that she was not heavy enough. ‘If she had only been a sailing barque of some 300 tons’—and so on. Then the old pilot came on deck to see what was the matter. He pulled a long face, and looked utterly bewildered, but had no advice to give.

"Steam is now ready, so at it we go full speed ahead. And now, with steam and all sails pulling her, the poor little *Diana* is soon down on her beam ends, and it is blowing a gale on the port quarter. Word comes that a nasty floe has blocked the stem, and she cannot break or move it. Can she be got astern just a wee bit! No. There she is, packed close up to the very rudder. But the floe ahead moves with the pressure, and presently there is a space of some two feet aft. So now 'Astern!' is the order. Bang she comes into the floe astern.

"'Go ahead, sir — there, she slews!' is the cheerful news from the forecastle.

"And now she starts ahead, to hit the opposing floe more on the cant or corner. There is a grand struggle, which must end in a few moments either in final defeat or in victory for little *Diana*.

"'There she slews it!' is the welcome news.

"'There it goes!' says another.

"A little more, and she will master her opponent; but, only once stop, and we shall be fast, for the sand floe has a strong grip of our tormentor, and is holding him fast under our bows and ahead still. If we have but power sufficient to cant it, there is still plenty of room to steer ship into more open water to windward.

"'Does she move it?' is the anxious enquiry from us aft.

"'Yes, it still goes slowly. Can you see it?'

"Yes; in a few minutes we really can see the

sluggish monster moving forward, almost imperceptibly, on our lee. Now it seems to stop—now it moves ahead. At last, with a sudden jerk, it gives way, and then surrenders the glory of conquest to our little craft, which at once forges ahead, and in a short time is again free, and in the more open water.

"But still the prospect is only poor. The pack from windward follows us up at a rapid rate, coming down before the gale and current. We now head out under full steam, stowing all sails, and once more breathe freely. Then, from our ice-master in the crow's-nest comes the ominous news that the pack is coming down, and closing in fast upon us, from as far and further than the eye can reach to windward. Well, all that can now be done is to steam at it, head to wind, as fast as possible, and live in the hopes that we may get out free before it closes in tightly. For four or five hours more we steam on and on, at times hardly able to see a hundred yards ahead, because of blinding rain, and hardly able to run through the ponderous masses of floe-ice. It is truly a grand sight, although under the most anxious circumstances.

"July 1. Noon.—Out into clear water. Wind flew round into the north-west, blowing hard. Set sails double reef'd, and banked fires. 6 P.M.—Beat through a lane in the pack on the south coast, and arrived on the coast at 8 P.M., in the same position as we were on Sunday last. Sighted a

schooner to westward. The captain came on board. She proved to be a Hammerfest sealing craft. She has obtained only about 200 seals and 25 walrus since April last, and is now trying to get on to the east coast of this sea—halfway up to the northward. As we have nothing else to do, we will accompany her, for company's sake.

“July 3.—Passed through the south pack again, and shaped our course for Lutke Island once more. Schooner in company. 6 A.M.—Close down to our late battle-ground. Found all things much about the same.

“July 5.—Still dodging amongst the loose pack-ice. The schooner managed to pick up a fine walrus yesterday. The captain amused us by holding the skull on the top of his own fair head. The enormous tusks, protruding on each side of his thin face, made him appear a most remarkable object. We fear this quiet weather is not favourable for breaking up and taking away the ice; but still we hope for the best, and meanwhile try to have perfect patience. Lat.  $69^{\circ} 25'$  N.; long.  $66^{\circ} 35'$  E.; temperature of air in shade,  $45^{\circ}$ ; ditto in the sun,  $65^{\circ}$ ; water surface,  $38^{\circ}$ ; density,  $4^{\circ}$ .

“July 6.—Fine calm weather and clear sky. Moored to an ice-floe. Held a prayer-meeting in the cabin. About half the crew attended. We invited only those who wished to come. There was no compulsion. Read the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth Psalms, and the tenth chapter of

Proverbs. After discoursing upon them, had a prayer and a hymn, and several from Sankey's book. Presented those with Bibles who had none, and dispersed in about an hour and a half. . . .

"Fine, clear weather. . . . We are now in a sad fix—no less than being caught in the ice. Yes, here we are, caught fast in a trap—the pack all closed in around us. We have been caught napping, which makes it all the more vexatious. All hands of the watch on deck were busy shifting the boats. Carpenter and self on the ice, caulking the gig to make her tight, being leaky, when the ice-master, happening to look up from his work, discovered us beset with ice, and our channel out nearly closed. Steam was got up quickly, the boat hoisted up, and ship's head put towards the once open, but now closed, channel. At it we go full speed, hoping thereby to break through the loose ice in the nip. Soon she arrives at it. 'Hold fast, every one!' Bounding up, she runs nearly half her length, and slides back gently, when we discover we have made only a small impression. This is repeated again and again, by backing astern for about a quarter of a mile, and going at it full speed again. But all is of no avail. The gates are closed, and all is closing in behind us so fast that we are at last glad to get into a broken part of the main floe, and lie there, as it were, in a dock, free from nips, for the ice is now nipping hard. In fact, twice was *Diana* held in its grip for about a quarter of an hour, until we managed to

cut her out with ice spades, etc. She is not heavy enough to break the ice after she runs up on to it. So now we are chafing sadly under our silly mishap. Ice-master hopes the ice may open with change of tide, for we don't relish being carried off with it to the north-west for a month or two, or even more, as the old pilot informs us sometimes happens. But, then, I have no faith in the old fellow.

"July 7.—Weary with anxiety and watching, we lie down for a rest. In a short time we hear the order given from the masthead by the ice-master, 'Go ahead full speed.' We rush on deck, to find the nip opening, and soon, with a few backings and going aheads, we succeed in pointing *Diana's* head for the opening. In a trice she is steaming through, and in five minutes the danger is left behind."

On the following day two other Norwegian vessels were sighted. They seemed to be moored to an ice-floe off Lutke Island. "They will have cleared it of all the eider-ducks' eggs and down," writes *Diana's* captain; "well, we cannot but wish them success, for not being able to get them ourselves, we must not be tempted to act the dog in the manger."

On July 10 the Captain managed to land on the Yalmal Peninsula. He found a large lake, "from which a shoal stream meandered to the sea, but no boat could get to it without much trouble." He also came across a number of relics, which seemed

to tell a tragic story. They consisted of two old Russian boats, turned up, and a sledge, which must have been deserted many years previously. "Oars, anchors, etc., were still within them, and, near by, the remains of an encampment. Deer-horns, bones, and other things—all rotting—were scattered about in all directions. Soon we came across a rough memorial over a grave. It consisted of a perpendicular board, with a rude imitation of a man's head carved on the top. Two arms, at opposite angles, crossed the board, and some letters, apparently Russian, were scratched upon them. We asked ourselves, how many corpses were covered by that earth? Who were these men? How long were they here? What sufferings did they endure? Who was the last man, and what became of him?"

The Captain gathered a few mosses and wild-flowers, among which were the sweet anemone and one forget-me-not. "A poor little lark, which had got away from its warm nest, hobbled across our path. So we secured it, and he is now sitting on the table, close to this rough Journal, as we write—quite at home, having made a fine meal off hard-boiled egg and cold water, judiciously put before him. Some small ermines and a few eggs fell to the lot of the men. The boy, Harry, is now in his glory, blowing the eggs, but is puzzled to know what kind they are—hopes Mr Potts may know."

The next day "we killed our first 'seal.' But when brought on board it turned out to be only

a poor little ‘floe rat,’ just large enough to cover a lady’s footstool.”

For more than three weeks longer the *Diana* had to battle with the ice on the west coast of the Samoyede Peninsula—“dodging about” under canvas or steam—“steaming pell-mell into the loose pack-ice”—“turning and twisting”—“going ahead and going astern in the most outrageous fashion”—locked in the ice, with blocks twenty feet high—moored to floes—advancing northwards a few miles, and then compelled to retreat—“jammed up in a bight, with ice-floes all around”—enveloped in dense fog—“wriggling through the floes,” and sometimes almost unmanageable, owing to the swirl of the current or the tide. “This is the work and the kind of place to make us more clearly see and understand what poor weakly creatures we are, and how helpless, when striving against the forces of nature, or, rather, the works of God.

“Meanwhile, one is much tempted to ask, what is to be the end of it all? Are we to win our passage, or be swept away to the northward and westward for a month or two, or perhaps for altogether, in the merciless grip of the dread pack? But we check ourselves, and are forced to say, in the most humble manner, and with the most perfect faith, ‘My times are in Thy hand.’

“I am afraid we started a month too soon, and have made a mistake by following the lane from the Waigats Straits, and thus becoming trapped in the ice here. It would have been better had

we remained in the Straits until the pack passed away, and then have proceeded right across the Kara Sea to White Island, near the mouth of the Obi.

"Oh, for a balloon! What wonders it would probably reveal! We could ascend two or three thousand feet, and 'view the landscape o'er,' or, rather, the ice-scape. This would give us a range of some sixty, or perhaps eighty, miles; whereas from the masthead we can't trace ice more than three miles with certainty—indeed, scarcely as much as that.

"We fancy we can see the Norwegian craft; but the mirage is so powerful that we can make out little or nothing for certain on the horizon. A black or dirty piece of ice is soon made to appear a tall, massive ship, with all sails set, and the whole horizon seems elevated at least seven or ten feet, if not more. The mirage, however, suggests one pleasing thought—it is caused by the pureness of the air, from which we dissatisfied beings are deriving benefit. Yes—there is no mistake—this is the climate for consumptive and 'bronchial' people. Why, the whole crew to a man, skipper included, are beginning to get quite Tichbornes in appearance, but more healthy than that poor wretch could ever be. As for Lady Chang, one can but compare her with a noble 'ground seal' or a walrus, as she lies stretched on the deck. And the boy Harry—well, his mother would repudiate him!"

Once the *Diana* went aground, owing to her drawing about two feet more than marked. “This mistake in marking might have caused the loss of the ship.” Every effort was made to move her, without success; but with the flowing tide she floated off. Whilst cruising about in this gulf—Baidarata, or Muddy Gulf—Captain Wiggins came across a sandy island, about six miles long, which was not laid down on any chart.

The monotony of an almost unending battle with the ice was once relieved by a visit of three Samoyedes, who came alongside in a light boat. They were dressed in skins, and “looked like Eskimos, only with much better physiognomy, and of finer stature. They came on deck and began at once to survey. Spying the marine glasses, the oldest of the three quickly divined their use. He put them to his eyes, and then expressed unbounded astonishment at the manner in which objects presented themselves. They soon showed a desire to barter, and gladly exchanged some skins for a bucket or two of salt. We gave them some biscuits, tea, and beads, as well as a knife and a brooch each, and right pleased they were. We took them to the engine-room, and showed them all its wonders. They appeared to be father and two sons—fine, clear, ruddy countenances, jet-black hair, cut straight round the forehead. They inspected almost everything, were much amused at *Diana's* figurehead, and concluded their visit by measuring the

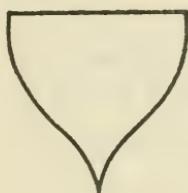
length of the ship, spanning their arms along the rails."

On July 25 there were no less than five Norwegian vessels moored in the vicinity of the *Diana*. "We now muster a goodly fleet and a large number of souls—not less than eighty. It was cheering to see so many jolly, happy-looking fishermen. Many of them turned out on to the ice to see us, and several came on board. We were astonished to see so many fisher-boys amongst them—not over eight or nine years of age. They were fat, hardy little fellows, well fitted with sea-boots, sheath-knives in their belts, and so on."

At last the *Diana* found a comparatively clear passage northward, although having to dodge incessantly the floating ice. On August 5 she rounded White Island, and then steamed towards the mouth of the Obi. The Captain found that White Island had been placed wrongly on the chart—some thirty or forty miles westward of its actual position. From further observation he was led to the conclusion that much of the land in the neighbourhood was laid down on the charts wrongly. He also found, in lat.  $73^{\circ} 16'$  N. and long.  $74^{\circ} 40'$  E., a long, low, sandy island, which had no place in the charts.

With the *Diana* moored to a floe at the mouth of the mighty Obi, and only a few miles from the mouth of the Yenesei, the position of the Captain was a trying and tantalising one. If he could only

survey these rivers—even but for a short distance—one of his most fervent desires would be partly gratified, and he would accomplish a notable exploit. But many serious considerations blocked the way to the achievement of his desires. The *Diana* was not a suitable vessel for the purpose. She drew too much water, and, “with her sharply-pointed keel, would take the ground, with strong



current and ice forcing her on, and literally roll right over and capsize at once. Her bottom was like this section. What is required to survey and proceed up these gulf and rivers is a flat-bottomed, small vessel, of about thirty tons, drawing four feet instead of twelve.”

Expense was also a consideration, for every month, after the first four months, involved an expenditure of something like £300. There was another important fact to bear in mind. A passion for exploration did not pervade the majority of the crew. They wanted sport—walrus and seal-hunting—so that “oil-money” might line their purses before returning home. This lack of enthusiasm prevailed in spite of the Captain’s promise that they should share in the £2,000 reward, which had been offered to any ship entering the Obi. A few of the crew, it is true, were eager to go forward, and risk the possibility of being rolled over on a mud-bank, or being starved to death. Not the least of the considerations

which faced the Captain was the question of food ; for the ship was not provisioned for another three or four months' knocking about in seas, and gulfs, and rivers.

Regret mingled with the brave Captain's cogitations at this moment. Why did he not remain in the Muddy Gulf, he asked himself, get ashore somehow, inspect the land and the rivers, and see whether a canal across the isthmus to the Obi was not practicable, and thus save a journey round the peninsula of some 800 or 900 miles ? With his sanguine vision, he could almost see the canal cut, and British argosies passing through to the great river, laden with rich cargoes for the millions of Siberia.

Regrets were useless. To return to the Muddy Gulf now was out of the question. Looking at all the circumstances, undoubtedly the most sensible plan to adopt was to turn *Diana's* head homewards, learn to profit by the experiences of her voyage, find a more suitable craft for a second venture, starting a month later in the year, when the ice would prove less formidable and obstructive. So, at the first opportunity, the Captain bade farewell to his ice-floe, and set his face homewards.

The *Diana* often had to dodge the ice, and "twist and turn" before she once more passed through the "Iron Gates" of the Kara Sea. Three days before entering the Straits the Captain threw overboard a tin case, hermetically sealed, containing written instructions for any person

finding it to forward it to one of the geographical societies. "This will prove the set of the currents. This is the first one. Sorry we forgot to do so at the Obi."

When out of the Straits the Captain decided to steer to the west side of Nova Zembla, hoping to meet with the Austrian expedition under Lieutenant Weyprecht. He went as far as Kostin Bay, but found no traces of the gallant party. Bad weather prevented him from pursuing his search along the coast. He then bore away for Vardoe, but his intentions were again baffled. He was caught in a severe westerly gale, driven northwards, and was then compelled to make straight for Hammerfest.

"September 7.—Steamed into Hammerfest. On entering the harbour, our agent came on board, and informed us of the safety of the Austrians, and that they were expected by steamer from Vardoe in about an hour. If we had only managed to get to Vardoe, we should have had the pleasure of bringing them here. Noon.—Steamer passed under our stern, and we gave the Austrians three hearty cheers as they gazed at us."

After being buffeted with gales and squalls, the *Diana* at length reached Dundee on September 25, having spent three months and three weeks on her adventurous cruise.

Thus the first expedition of modern times reached the mouth of the Obi by the Kara Sea



CAPTAIN WIGGINS AND "LADY CHANG."

[To face p. 46.]



route. An open channel had been rediscovered. Captain Wiggins' observations led him to the conclusion that the Gulf Stream found its way, by the Waigats and Pet Straits, to the Kara Sea, causing at least the southern part of these waters to be open for about two months in the year. From the point which he reached at the mouth of the Obi the sea was quite open to the eastward, and partly open to the north-westward. He saw clearly that, with a suitable craft, it would be an easy matter to reach the mouths of the Obi and the Yenesei, and to ascend both rivers.

The belief that the Kara Sea was blocked to navigation all the year round by impenetrable ice was thus disproved. It is true, as already mentioned, that Norwegian fishing-smacks were accustomed to sail into the Kara Sea; but this fact was not generally known, and it was reserved for Captain Wiggins to prove to the world that navigation was not only practicable, but easy, and that certain maps, issued as late as 1872, showing "everlasting ice" between Nova Zembla and lat.  $105^{\circ}$  E., were wrong.

The great importance of these observations and discoveries was quickly recognised in England and other countries. Siberian merchants looked upon the Captain's voyage as the first step towards opening a new and profitable trade with Europe. English and Russian merchants and naval men were not so sanguine; they saw the importance of the voyage, but waited for further proofs of

the practical nature of the Captain's scheme before giving it their support.

The discovery of the sand island at the mouth of the Obi, and of the misplacement of White Island on the maps, contributed to the usefulness of the voyage. The Captain's observations in the Muddy Gulf may be reported in his own words. "I examined well up towards the head of the Gulf, and found it easy of access for the largest vessels nearly to the end, there being a depth of from eight to three fathoms, shoaling gradually. The bottom was hard sand, whereas I had been informed by the Norwegians that this Gulf could not be navigated far up because it was full of mud. The shore was bold and high on both sides, the current running out and the water very dirty, which told me there must be a large river at the head of the Gulf. The distance from side to side was about twelve or fifteen miles. We were then not more than sixty miles from the Obi river. I should have completed my examination of the Gulf had I been in possession of a shallow-draft screw-launch."

He goes on to refer, in this contribution to the Press, to the operations of enterprising traders in this corner of the Russian Empire hundreds of years ago. "On referring to Wrangel's 'Polar Sea,' I find that some three centuries ago the Russians from Archangel carried on trade with the Obi *via* this very Gulf. This was done in wretched boats called 'kotchies,' built of bark,

and sewn together with willow twigs. They coasted the south Samoyede land, proceeding up the river at the head of the Gulf, when, coming to a lake, they discarded their boats, and hauled them across a narrow neck of land, only 200 fathoms wide, and launched them into another river which ran direct into the Obi. Thence they proceeded on to Obdorsk or Beregov, trading towns on the Obi.

"If this could be accomplished by such inefficient means," the Captain continues, "what is there to prevent the same thing being done now by the superior class of steam shipping of the present day? To me it seems a crying shame—particularly with respect to England, with all her means—that such a vast commerce should be dormant for the want of ordinary enterprise. To the north-westward, the Hudson's Bay Company people trade successfully for some two or three months every summer in quite as unfavourable districts as these, and it pays them well to keep up, at an enormous expense, in those territories, forts, stores, staffs of superintendents, servants, etc., and a fleet of most expensive Arctic, or ice, steamers, to do battle with the dread ice of these regions, and this only for one kind of commerce—furs—whilst the Kara Sea route combines with this all other kinds of trading, together with a grand market outwards for our own manufactured goods."

These were some of the forcible arguments which the Captain urged persistently, both at this

time and in after years, in his lectures, in private correspondence, and in communications to the Press, for the purpose of arousing interest and enthusiasm in the opening up of Siberia by means of its great rivers. Whilst doing all in his power in this direction, he never indulged in a bid for popular applause. He sought to efface himself—a hopeless task—in the scheme which he so vigorously advocated. In fact, he was too modest, and his scrupulous watchfulness in this respect was enough to raise a smile, as the following little incident will show.

A statement appeared in a London journal that he had penetrated into the Muddy Gulf further than any previous navigator. The Captain promptly sent a letter to the Editor, repudiating the honour thrust upon him, and assigning the pioneering glory to the “wretched kotchies” of the sixteenth century. His chivalrous spirit led him to ascribe “honour to whom honour was due”—not excepting those bark-and-willow boats of a barbaric age. He added: “It is also my desire that the public should clearly understand that I put in no claims as a ‘discoverer.’ I have simply verified that which has been known and made use of in days past. My only wish is to endeavour to show to the world at large that we are probably in a position in the present day to make use of the same route, and, by this means, to unfold the untold mineral and other wealth that now lies hidden in the vast tracts of Central Siberia, and also to divert

the present expensive overland route from Central Asia and China to Europe."

But whilst the Captain shrank from appropriating any honour in connection with his venture, the real importance and value of the voyage were not lost sight of by some of the more sagacious and reputable journals of the day. The *Athenaeum*—always cautious in its bestowal of praise—gave the voyage precisely the high rank which it deserved. "The return of another expedition from the North Polar regions has been chronicled in the past week; and although it had more of a commercial object than its predecessors, it was, nevertheless, as much a Polar Expedition as those that sailed under Buchan, Parry, and others, and endeavoured to discover a north-west passage as a short road to Cathay and the East."

The Captain's right place amongst Arctic adventurers, at this early stage of his exploring career, was thus justly and accurately defined.

Wiggins received congratulations from many quarters. One letter, which he greatly appreciated, came from Dr Petermann, dated from Gotha, September 29. "To-day I learn with great pleasure from the newspapers that you had a successful voyage, and returned to Dundee on the 25th inst. As you mentioned in yours of June 18, from Tromsoe, that you would advise me of your return by telegraph, I must mention to you that I have received neither telegram nor letter up to this date.

"I beg to congratulate you sincerely on your

success, and am particularly glad that you, as an Englishman, have shown that the Kara Sea can be entered and navigated, and the mouths of the Obi and Yenesei reached. I should think this would prove of weighty importance, and occasion, in the first instance, the despatch of a proper exploratory expedition under your direction. The Austrian Expedition, just returned, having found an unusually close season, and much ice on the north of Nova Zembla, might have a mischievous influence, if you had not found the contrary further to the south. The notice I read in the papers was very meagre and confused, so I long all the more for a full and authentic account from yourself."

Although Wiggins' own country-men held back from utilising his discovery, the Germans, with their usual enterprising spirit, were eager to embrace the opportunity of opening new markets with Central Siberia by the sea route. They were already doing a profitable trade at the mouth of the Petchora—some 400 miles west of the icy regions of the Kara Sea—and they quickly realised the advantages of being able to extend operations eastward, and "tap" the "Land of Goshen."

Dr Petermann, writing to Wiggins on October 3, draws attention to the movement in Germany. "In the right quarters here your voyage has excited much interest, and I hear that people in Hamburg seriously entertain the idea of making use of the results of your voyage to open a commercial route to the Obi and the Yenesei, and thus

give a new impulse to bringing forward the immense products of the half of Asia. I know one of my own friends would at once despatch a vessel, if the case is made clear to him. I am therefore very anxious to hear from you, and to learn your own view of the case."

The voyage of the *Diana* naturally excited a spirit of emulation amongst Arctic adventurers, and Professor Nordenskiöld, the Swedish explorer, left Tromsoe on June 8, 1875, on board the *Pröven*. He passed through the Yugor or Pet Straits into the Kara Sea, found the water open, and anchored at the mouth of the Yenesei. The *Pröven* was sent back to Norway, and the Professor, with some of his companions, ascended the river in a paddle steamer, belonging to a merchant on the river, as far as the town of Yeneseisk, and then went to St Petersburg overland. Thus the Professor's expedition was amongst the first-fruits of Captain Wiggins' brave and successful venture. It is surprising that Nordenskiöld, in his book on his north-east voyages, lays claim to the honour of being the first modern explorer to penetrate into the Kara Sea, to the mouths of the rivers—an honour which, most distinctly, belongs to the English mariner.

## CHAPTER IV

### ADVENTURES OF A YARMOUTH CUTTER

Presentation to the Captain by Lieutenant Weyprecht—

Another expedition projected—Only a “whim” of the Captain’s—“An awfu’ darin’ man”—The *Whim* starts for the Kara Sea—Frustration of intentions—The “unexpected” happens at Vardoe—Meeting with Admiral Glassenoff and Professor Mohn—A visit to Archangel, and what came of it—The Captain rejoins the *Whim* at Seven Islands—Near Kologueve Island—Long and tedious voyage home—Norwegian fishermen’s dread of Russian taxation—“Snapshots” of lovely scenery—Lady Chang in trouble—“Grace Holman”—The herring fleet—“Poor little *Whim*” on her beam ends—Safe at Sunderland—The gains of the voyage—Correspondence with M. Sidoroff—The Royal Geographical Society, and the Meteorological Office—Letter to Nordenskiöld—The Professor and the “humble mariner” meet at St Petersburg—Dinner to the explorers—Story of the first St Petersburg interlude—High hopes collapse—Toiling and moiling at Havre—A fit of depression.

It is pleasant to note the very friendly relationship existing between Captain Wiggins and Lieutenant Weyprecht, the leader of the Austro-German Arctic Expedition, which the Captain attempted to relieve. The two men had a high opinion of

each other's qualities, and this mutual admiration comes to light in several letters. The Captain asserted that Weyprecht was one of the few explorers whom he would most gladly serve under, in almost any capacity. Amongst the services which the Captain rendered his gallant friend, was the editing of a pamphlet, printed in English, giving a brief account of the expedition. In the spring of 1875, the Lieutenant presented the Captain with a powerful binocular glass, as a small acknowledgment of the effort made to find the missing party, and supply them with provisions. The glass bore the following inscription :—

“To JOSEPH WIGGINS, Esq.

Every time you look through these glasses,  
remember a true friend, whom by your philan-  
thropic and generous behaviour you have obliged  
for life.

WEYPRECHT,

Commander, Austrian Arctic Expedition, 1874.”

Captain Wiggins fully determined, even before the *Diana* reached home, to make another voyage to the Kara Sea in the following summer, timing his departure from England at the beginning of July, instead of the beginning of June, and thus set out with a well-grounded hope of finding his track quite clear of ice. But the voyage of the *Diana*, undertaken entirely at his own expense, somewhat crippled his private resources, and he felt unable to execute his project without the help of friends and sympathisers. In the course of lectures

at various places, he advocated the formation of a small company for the furtherance of his commercial project, but failed to meet with a response. Had he contrived to make a little more noise in the world, a few capitalists might have come to his aid. He was incapable of blowing his own trumpet, and he scorned to pay other people to blow it for him.

The members of the Young Men's Christian Association of Sunderland, amongst whom the Captain was exceedingly popular, warmly urged him to go forward. At length, a small amount of help was afforded by Mr Edward Backhouse, and Mr M. Weiner, German Consul at Sunderland. Each of these gentlemen contributed £100 towards the purchase and equipment of a vessel.

The cost of an expedition such as the Captain had contemplated, carried out with a small steamer, would amount to about £1,000, or with a shallow steam-launch and a sailing-vessel about £600 to £700. He hoped to obtain a crew of "free-service volunteers," and thus considerably reduce his estimate of the entire cost.

Summer was now coming on apace, and no further contributions had been offered. The Captain, though a little disheartened, was not discouraged. He was fully resolved not to let the season pass away without buying a vessel, and setting off to the North. But he had to consider that he must accommodate his ideas to his slender finances.

He went to Yarmouth in the middle of June,

bought a tiny craft—a mere fishing sloop of only twenty-seven tons, manned usually by a man and a boy, and took her to Sunderland to be fitted. Some sea-faring wiseacres looked with astonishment at this “bit of a boat,” and then looked askance at the owner, who was standing near. “It’s only a whim of Captain Wiggins,” said one to another. The Captain overheard the remark, and at once chimed in with the rejoinder, “Well, then, let’s call her the *Whim*.” And the *Whim* she was forthwith christened.

“Nearly everybody thought me almost a lunatic, if not quite,” said the Captain on one occasion in his later life, “when I bought this craft for an Arctic expedition.”

It was not the first time by any means that he had ventured on a long voyage in a small vessel, and the seamen of Sunderland had got into the way of saying, “Eh, eh—but the Capt’n’s an awfu’ daring man !”

Without losing an hour, Wiggins set about fitting and equipping the boat, which was ready for her voyage in about a fortnight. His ingenuity was taxed to the utmost in providing accommodation for himself and his crew. Everything had to be in miniature. The saloon, measuring six feet long by five wide, and five deep, contained a small table, seats along the sides, and, above them, the berths for the Captain and his mate. The cooking apparatus was a model of smallness, compactness, and completeness combined. Every nook and corner was utilised

for a cupboard or a locker. The forecastle was fitted to accommodate five seamen. A jolly-boat, and a flat-bottomed canoe, or shallop, were carried on deck. The *Whim* was described as a vessel "trim and snug, with a spencer and square sail on the mast-proper, a small spencer sail at the stern, and the usual jibs."

The *Whim* sailed from Sunderland, on June 28, 1875, bound for the Kara Sea. It was the Captain's intention to survey the Baidarata, or Muddy Gulf, proceed to the head of the river Baidarata, and, by following the old route of the sixteenth-century Russian traders, cross over to Obdorsk, and find out whether goods could be carried across the narrow isthmus, or a canal be cut, for vessels to convey goods to the Obi. But his intentions were destined to be entirely frustrated. Unexpected events defeated his plans for the voyage, and yet had the effect of giving expansion and fresh impulse to his scheme of trade with Siberia.

The *Whim* met with strong gales and dense fogs on her journey to North Norway. She arrived at Hammerfest on July 12, and was detained here for a week by bad weather and waiting for the mails. Leaving this port on July 19, she soon encountered northerly gales, and had to take shelter, first in Loxefjord, and then in Kollefjord harbour. She put into Vardoe harbour on July 27, in company with a large Russian steamer.

At Vardoe the unexpected happened. Captain Wiggins went ashore to visit the English Consul,

who showed him some old maps of the Kara Sea and the river Obi. He told the Captain that a Russian Admiral (Glassenoff), Inspector of Customs at Archangel, then on board the Russian steamer, was very much interested in his voyage, and would be exceedingly glad to see him.

"Just then," to quote from the Captain's Journal, "who should come in but Professor Mohn, of Christiana. He was visiting all the ports in a small steamer, testing variations of temperature, etc. He also became intensely interested in my voyage.

"We all three went on board the Russian mail-steamer. I was introduced to the Admiral, who at once said to me: 'I am exceedingly interested in your voyage. Is there anything I can do for you? If so, only name it, and, if possible, I will do it. Come and have tea with me, and we can have a talk.'

"He then introduced me to General Stellingar, the manager of the Steam Company. In a few minutes the Admiral requested me to tell him exactly what I intended to do. When he heard that I desired to survey the isthmus at the head of the Muddy Gulf, he said at once, 'Sidoroff, the merchant, has a concession of the Obi, as you are aware, and doubtless he knows all about those parts, having been to Obdorsk, and to the mouth of the Obi. It seems a pity for you to waste time in going there. Would it not be better to go and see him?'

"I informed him that this was one of the things which I much desired, having telegraphed to St. Petersburg but an hour or two since, to ask if he was at the Petchora. If the answer was in the affirmative, I intended going to see him at the Petchora River, and then on to the Muddy Gulf, hoping the merchant would accompany me thither.

"'I can save you the suspense of waiting for an answer to your telegram,' said the Admiral; 'for Sidoroff is at the Petchora. A friend of mine saw him on the road a fortnight ago.'

"'That being the case,' I rejoined, 'I shall start at once for the Petchora.'

"'Even then I fear you would only waste time,' said the Admiral; 'for depend upon it, Sidoroff would never go to the isthmus just now. He must prepare at St. Petersburg for such a journey. It would be much better for you to see him there in the winter.'

"'Even if I took your advice,' I replied, 'I should still feel it my duty to proceed to the isthmus now, and—'

"'Ah, but you ought to know,' said the Admiral eagerly, 'that the Russian Government, being so anxious about the Obi, have already surveyed two or more passes in the Urals, with the view of constructing a railway to the Petchora from the Urals. Now, the best thing you can do is to make up your mind at once to go with me to Archangel, where I have got maps which will

show you everything you require. You have advanced new ideas, and it now only remains to be decided which route is the best.'

"'I am greatly obliged to you,' I answered, 'but I can hardly break my voyage so suddenly without well considering the matter. I am conducting an expedition, as it were, although so small.'

"'Yes, certainly you are,' rejoined the Admiral; 'but your vessel is indeed a small one. You ought to have a steamer.'

"'I replied that I could not afford one.

"'Then you had much better put off the expedition till next year, and, with Sidoroff's and other help, come out in a suitable steamer.'

"'But I shall lose a season,' I urged.

"'You must not think this work is to be done in a year or two; it will take many years. Now, Captain Wiggins, I am much interested in the Obi, and I see you are determined to go this season. If you will go with me to Archangel, see and copy my maps, there will then be time for you to carry out your wish. You could instruct your officers to bring your ship to the Seven Islands. You could go to Archangel, and then steam back to the Seven Islands in about the same length of time as it would take your ship to get there. To show you that my desire to see the mighty Obi opened is thoroughly genuine, if you will come with me to Archangel, I will wire to the Government at St Petersburg,

and ask leave to accompany you on your expedition."

That was the "last straw" of the Admiral's urgent persuasions that broke the back of the Captain's resolutions, and in the end "broke" his voyage.

"I saw at once the great value of Government interest; it seemed opened to me in a providential manner. The Russian steamer was weighing anchor, and all must be decided in a minute or two. I turned to Professor Mohn, and asked his advice. 'I think you had better go,' he replied.

"I then said to the Admiral, 'If you will take the responsibility of advising, and if you really mean that you will accompany me to the Obi, providing you obtain the permission of the Government, then I will go with you to Archangel, although I must tell you again that I fear I shall be breaking the voyage.'

"'You do right, I am quite sure,' said the Admiral. 'I will get all the interest for you that I possibly can at St. Petersburg, and, even if your voyage should be broken, you must not mind losing a season.'

"I rushed on board the *Whim*, got my portmanteau, and was soon steaming away to Archangel."

The journey to Archangel afforded considerable diversion and enjoyment. The steamer had to call at two or three ports, and Wiggins seemed almost entranced with the beauties of the fiords, and with

sunlight effects. He notes briefly some of the sights which impressed him—the “glowing colours on the mountain-sides”—the “perfect calm and stillness of the water”—the “mirage by setting of the sun”—the “grand entrance” to Kola Bay and Fiord—the “lovely green spots” on the shore—native villages, with their curious round huts made of mud or turf, and tents of reindeer-skins—the midnight-sun effects—the “wildness and grandeur of rocks and mountains”—the boat-women, left by the men to manage the boats—“the variety of colour in their dress,” and the Asiatic appearance of their costumes—“merry and happy women coming to inspect the ship,” and then going to the shore, and “cutting large boughs to use as sails, and making for ‘Home, sweet home.’”

“The duty of our Government to erect a monument here (Kola), not to the memory of that gallant British officer, who, during the Crimean War, destroyed this defenceless town, but to the memory of brave Sir Hugh Willoughby and his crew, who perished here after attempting to discover a north-east passage.”

Captain Wiggins stayed two days in Archangel, and left on August 6, “in a broken-down steamer,” for Seven Islands. He was not accompanied by Admiral Glassenoff, but he carried with him valuable introductions from the Admiral to influential people in St Petersburg, which he found useful in the course of a few months.

After waiting three days for favourable weather,

he set off in the *Whim* towards the Petchora. He soon encountered severe easterly and north-easterly gales, but succeeded in running nearly to Kologueve Island. The following laconic entries in his Journal show the decision which he now arrived at, and the reasons for change of plans.

“Season evidently broken. No sense in forcing our way, so late on in the season, to Petchora, merely to see Sidoroff, when I could see him at Petersburg during the winter. Could easily continue on now, and land at Petchora myself, proceeding with Sidoroff overland to St. Petersburg in comfort and ease, leaving my crew to battle their way home with the poor little *Whim*. Rather than this, I prefer to give it up at once, and share the risk of the long passage home in this small and unfitted vessel. Had she been but a moderately good steamer, I could yet have done the whole voyage that I so much covet—that is, run into Petchora, see Sidoroff, thence proceed to Muddy Gulf and Isthmus, etc. But discretion and prudence being the better parts of valour, we give up for this season, and turn back for home.”

It took the *Whim* nearly eleven weeks to get home, whereas the *Diana* ran practically the same distance in less than a month.

The passage was one of almost incessant gales, and again and again the little craft had to take shelter in a harbour or a fiord. The Captain accepted the situation with philosophical fortitude. He made the very best of it. There is not a word

of grumbling or of discontent throughout his Journal of this trying journey. Now and then trifling diversions from the enforced tedium occurred, which he duly sets down, and some of the notes are worth transferring to these pages. English tourists who have explored the Norwegian fiords will recognise some of the Captain's "snapshot" allusions to beautiful scenery and sun-effects.

At Vardoe he discovered why the masters of Norwegian vessels fishing in the Kara Sea had always endeavoured to keep their expeditions secret, and when questioned upon the subject, had tried to make out that the difficulties and dangers arising from ice were most formidable and serious. Some Russian fishermen, just arrived from Nova Zembla, were at Vardoe. "We interrogate them as to the state of the ice. They report, 'No ice.' So I believe that the first report we received during the voyage of the *Diana* from the Norwegian sealing vessels was much exaggerated. We all know they have good reasons for concealing the fact that their ships go walrussing and sealing in the Kara Sea. They fear the Russian Government may prevent them, or place a heavy tax upon them, or that the Russians, if they know there is really good fishing in the Kara Sea, will go there themselves. But we think that the last of these considerations is groundless, for the Russian Nova Zembla vessels are but wretched craft—all soft wood, badly put together, and fastened with mere spikes or large-

headed nails. They are not even doubled with extra planks outside, showing what a trifling amount of ice they have to encounter.

“August 31.—Sail from Tromsoe. Pass through the Malanga Fiord. Splendid scenery. Snow-capped mountains. Old snow mingled with fresh, and with mist, delicately hanging half-way up, like a dainty gauze curtain. After-glow of sunset. Many-tinted colours of autumnal foliage—on small birch-trees and bushes, purple heather and dark-green juniper bushes. The quiet, but dark, fast-flowing stream we are in whirls round in strong eddies, with wild-fowl, eider-ducks, seagulls, etc., busy on the turbulent whirlpools, catching and digesting the unfortunate little ‘finners,’ that swarm in the eddies.

“The dark, deep shadows of mountains; snug little nooks of bays. Valleys and green spots occupied by ‘fishermen-farmers,’ with their little red-tiled, white houses. Here and there a kirk, with its ‘preaster hows.’

“Beat through Solberg Fiord. Anchor in a snug little harbour. Go on shore to pick ‘blueberries.’ Lady Chang distinguishes herself by slaying her first kid. Chastisement. Scene with the owner, an old man. Mode of pacifying him, namely, paying all he asks. Daughter thereupon wishes to improve upon the price—urges more, in spite of the fact that our ‘looch-man’ (pilot) declares, with strong emphasis, that they had got more than double what the animal was worth.

Chang, disgusted, goes away on her own hook for a few hours. Kid tasted well next day.

"Harvest-time for rye. They pile it up on poles, like hop-poles. Wretched-looking stuff.

"Anchor in small harbour, named Grace Holman. Pilot informs me, 'he be very rich merchant here.' (I imagine the 'he' to be Mr Holman, and that Grace was the name of his wife or daughter.) I see signs of it—fine house, clean muslin curtains, well-painted and well-filled store. So, discovering a gent on shore, I ask for Mr Holman. Told 'no such person lives here.' 'Then where is Mrs, or Miss, Grace Holman?' Chagrin, when told with a pitying smile that 'Holman' means 'harbour,' or 'anchorage,' and that 'Grace' is its name. Then find that there are 'Hols-Holman,' and many other 'Holmans.'

"Fishing-vessels running northward for the herring fishery. Each sloop, of some twenty tons, is accompanied by three or four small boats. Hundreds and hundreds of these pretty, fresh-painted, and well-kept vessels have passed us. Charming they look—the sun shining on their white—some red-tanned—sails, each sloop with her small boats looking, for all the world, like an old hen with her brood of chicks, or perhaps better, like an old duck and her ducklings, seeing they are on the water. They anchor every night, the men in the little boats retiring to the sloop to eat, drink, and sleep. A hard life for these Norsemen, but a very sociable one.

"September 3.—Anchored in a bay the night before. Blowing hard from south-west. Whilst getting under weigh, pilot requests us to turn her head round towards the shore, evidently to save time and ground. Result—poor little *Whim* is run quietly on shore, and, as the tide is ebbing, there she lies—falling over on her beam-ends, decks in the water. Take advantage of it by scrubbing the copper. *Whim's* first mishap—and on my birthday! Bad, very bad weather."

The *Whim* was still troubled with foul weather across the North Sea, but she arrived safely at Sunderland on October 5, and the Captain never attempted another Arctic voyage in a twenty-seven-ton Yarmouth cutter.

Had it not been for the severe gales—unusual in the months of June and July—by which the ship was caught, and the delay occasioned by the Captain's visit to Archangel, there is every probability that the voyage to the Muddy Gulf and a survey of the isthmus would have been accomplished. Professor Nordenskiöld, who was a few weeks in advance of Captain Wiggins, fortunately escaped the gales, and passed into the Kara Sea about the time that the *Whim* put in to Vardoe.

Nevertheless, the voyage was not without distinct gain. The Captain's introduction to Admiral Glassenoff led to his becoming associated with prominent merchants in St. Petersburg, and his obtaining the support of the Russian Government, and ultimately of the Czar himself.

It was now the intention of the Captain to prepare for another voyage, with the support of either English or Russian merchants. The interest shown in his projects by Admiral Glassenoff led him to apply without delay in the latter direction. As soon as he arrived in England he began a correspondence with M. Michael Sidoroff, one of the few Russian merchants who, at that time, were really in earnest on the question of developing the resources of Siberia by means of the ocean route. The following extracts from the Captain's letters exhibit, not only his enthusiasm on the subject, but also his various plans, carefully considered and worked out in his mind, for transforming Arctic waters into a new highway of commerce.

In a letter to M. Sidoroff, dated October 19, 1875, he expresses his thanks for a gift of maps of the northern seas and rivers, and goes on to say: "It is a very great pity I did not find you out earlier. Had I known there was such a person as you in St Petersburg, I should not have started for the Obi last year (in the *Diana*) without making arrangements with you; and had I then yoursplendid map, no earthly power would have persuaded me to return without first making a run up the Yenesei. If I had been aware that steamers ran down the Obi as far as Obdorsk, I should certainly have crossed the isthmus at the head of the Karskoi Bay, or Muddy Gulf, as it is called by the Norwegians. . . .

"I should certainly have proceeded to the Gulf this voyage (in the *Whim*), had I not been

intercepted by Admiral Glassenoff. I note that you do not hold out much hope that the navigation of the Gulf is as easy as I anticipate; but you do not say why."

He goes on to suggest that the survey of the Gulf and the Isthmus should be carried out at once, and then makes a definite offer of service. "If you will undertake to have a small cargo of graphite ready, or other valuable merchandise, say grain or furs, I feel sure I could persuade gentlemen here to send out a steamer, to take it from the head of the Gulf, or perhaps from Obdorsk itself, providing you could see your way to renew your offer of 1862, or to continue the offer of a reward of £2,000.

"You will wonder why I am so much in favour of this route after what you have told me of the project of joining the Petchora and the Obi by a railway. My reason is this—it will be exceedingly difficult to persuade speculators to try by the Petchora, seeing that the entrance is so shallow and dangerous to navigate, and the insurance difficult to get done in England, owing to the loss of so many vessels. On the other hand, the entrance to the Waigats Straits is deep, and some twenty-five miles wide, and the ice is cleared from the south shore of Samoycde Land right up to the Muddy Gulf by July."

He then points out some of the essential conditions for forming a Company in England to send out an expedition. "I note that you do not think it would be of any use if I read a paper before the

[To face p. 70.

A ROAD IN SIBERIA.





Imperial Geographical Society. But you must bear in mind that we do not want money ; my object would be to create interest in the Government in order to obtain concessions for an English Company, or for myself, to trade to the Obi and the Yenesei *via* the Waigats and Pet Straits and Muddy Gulf, and to be permitted to have Waigats Island as a dépôt, if we should find it necessary ; also to be allowed to raise landing-stages and dépôts at the head of Muddy Gulf, or to construct harbours. With a concession something like this, a powerful Company could easily be got together, but without it I fear nothing could be done.

" Our merchants and others could be persuaded to trade *via* the Petchora only by proving to them that the isthmus at the head of the Muddy Gulf was not practicable. If you have not sufficient information on the subject, I shall have great pleasure in accompanying you overland, from St. Petersburg or Archangel, to the Isthmus, or even to bring out a small shallow steamer, *via* the Waigats Straits, if you could see your way to accompany me, and to share the expense. Should you be unable to fall in with either of these proposals, perhaps you can offer a small cargo of graphite at Obdorsk, as I have already suggested.

" I enclose Admiral Glassenoff's letter of introduction, as I hardly expect to have the pleasure of seeing you for some time to come. I know not what it contains, being unable either to read or to speak your language, but I intend to learn

it as soon as possible. It was the Admiral who advised me to read a paper (or, rather, to have one read for me) before your Geographical Society, and he offers me an introduction to his brother, who, it seems, is Marine Minister to the Emperor.

"You allude to the good Sir Roderick Murchison. Had he been living now, I should be able to create some interest in our Geographical Society. They do not value this great question, as I have letters to prove. The enclosed Report (of the voyage of the *Diana*) is a copy of what I sent to them and to the Admiralty, when I asked for the loan of instruments for surveying purposes, etc. They replied that they did not consider the matter of such importance as to warrant them to lend any. One might well ask, What has our Geographical Society come to?<sup>1</sup>

"I fear I can hardly manage to come to St. Petersburg just now, in response to your kind invitation, for I am engaged to deliver lectures on my voyages, and by this means I hope to arouse interest in merchants and others, with the view of getting a good Company formed. Will you kindly let me know, by wire or letter, whether you think the Government would grant concessions. . . .

<sup>1</sup> It may be mentioned here that the Captain's application to the Meteorological Office, before starting on his voyage in the *Thames* in 1876, met with a different result. The Committee much appreciated the meteorological register kept on board the *Diana*. "We shall be delighted," to quote from Mr Robert H. Scott's letter, "to let you have instruments."

"Please give my best greetings to Professor Nordenskiöld when he arrives in St. Petersburg, and tell him I rejoice heartily, and warmly congratulate him on being the first European to make the round from the Kara Sea to Siberia and St. Petersburg. Tell him also that he must now try for Behring Strait, the grand Lena, and even the Pole itself by this favourable route of the Kara Sea. I proved by temperature and density observations of the water in Waigats Straits that the Gulf Stream, which turns round the North Cape to the eastward, continues to flow into those Straits, and at a rapid rate. The warm waters of your mighty Obi, Yenesei, Lena, etc., will soon do the rest, and enable a good steamer to pass along the coast with ease to Behring Strait.<sup>1</sup> Would that I had a commission from your Government to do this easy task!"

Several letters to the same correspondent followed during October and November, containing further suggestions for plans of co-operation with the merchants. The Captain had been urged again and again by M. Sidoroff to go to St. Petersburg, and it was doubtless his diffidence, in a measure, that prevented him from accepting the invitation. Although, as the pioneer of the new route, he deserved even more applause than the

<sup>1</sup> This was the route taken by the Swedish expedition, under Professor Nordenskiöld in 1878. Sailing from Carlskrona on July 4, it proceeded across the Kara Sea, round the North-East Cape and the East Cape to Behring Strait, and thence to Yokohama, where it arrived on September 2.

Professor, yet he—"a humble mariner," as he sometimes styled himself—was reluctant to appear to come into competition with the man to whom he had offered himself as a free-service volunteer in the Professor's Polar expedition of 1872.

Nordenskiöld arrived in St. Petersburg towards the end of October. On November 1 the Captain addressed the following letter to him. It is inserted mainly because it vividly reflects the writer's generous spirit—a spirit free from the slightest taint of petty jealousy or rivalry.

"MY DEAR SIR,—Permit me to congratulate you on your success in ascending the mighty Yenesei. My only desire now is that your success may not be allowed to die out in the minds of Russian merchants, and especially with the Russian Government, and that very soon we may see not only this river, but also the Obi, the Lena, and the Indigirka—as well as a high road right through to Behring Strait *via* the North-East Cape—opened up to commercial enterprise.

"I note that, like myself last year, you found the ice well to the northward. It only requires time and a few south winds to drive it northward. Then a good steamer could proceed onwards. May you live to undertake such a grand work, which is far beyond the question of the Pole itself, that is to say, in real value to mankind. . . .

"I find you had the sea inside the Straits much freer from ice than I had. This was owing to the north-east winds driving it all over to the western

shores, which was what we wanted last year, but the winds prevailed from the west the whole summer. Still, when we were off the mouths of the Obi and the Yenesei, from August 5 to 20, we found all open water to the northward. I could have run on any distance; had I been prepared to winter, I would have done so. I could not afford to keep out so large a vessel and the crew over a winter, and therefore it would have been imprudent of me to attempt more than I did.

"I note that you have taken temperatures of water and air. It will be interesting to compare mine with yours, although I gave up the deep-sea temperatures, because the present self-registering thermometers are of no use for that purpose. I hope the thermometer which you have overcame all difficulties.

"M. Sidoroff is anxious for me to come and meet you at St. Petersburg; but, having to give several lectures here and at other places, I cannot come yet. I shall no doubt do more good by working at home.

"I am most anxious to hear in what condition you found the river when getting well up. Should you have time to drop me a line with a short account of your experience, I shall deem it a great personal favour. Meanwhile believe me to be a sincere admirer of your present praiseworthy success, and an earnest well-wisher for your future undertakings.—Sincerely yours,

"JOSEPH WIGGINS."

Writing to M. Sidoroff on November 8, the Captain again alludes to the proposed meeting with the Professor, and makes clear what had yet to be done to demonstrate the utility of the ocean route to Siberia.

“On the whole, it is as well for me not to be with him just now, for he has earned his laurels by himself, and if I have been the means of his going to the river, I shall be well content. All I hope is, that you and your fellow-merchants will bear in mind that it is not yet demonstrated *that a cargo can be brought home*. After all, the greatest thing to do will be *to take a vessel to and from, and bring a cargo*; this has never yet been accomplished. Nevertheless, I believe it to be an easy task, and should be glad to be engaged to bring one for you, or for your fellow-merchants, providing I cannot create sufficient interest in this country for effecting the same object.”

Yielding at last to M. Sidoroff’s persuasions, which came in telegrams as well as in letters, the Captain went to St. Petersburg. Unfortunately, there seems to be no record in existence of the interviews between the renowned Professor and the “humble mariner.” It would be interesting to have their impressions of each other.

A dinner was given in honour of the explorers. Captain Wiggins made a speech, in which he asserted that, guided by his own experience, there was no difficulty in navigating the Kara Sea in the summer season. This remark created an

impression that he was attempting to minimise the Professor's exploit. He hastened to assure Nordenskiöld, who by that time had gone home to Sweden, that he was innocent of any such intention. In a few days the following friendly reply was received by the Captain.

“STOCKHOLM,  
December 3, 1875.

“MY DEAR SIR,—Many thanks for your letter of November 26. I am glad to be able to assure you that I regarded your statement at the dinner on the 22nd—that it was easy to navigate the Kara Sea—as the best compliment you could give our expedition, and I am astonished to hear that these words could give rise to misunderstanding.

“Thanking you for the cordial and hearty manner with which you met me at Petersburg, and for the pretty words you say about me in your lecture.—I remain, Sir, yours most truly,

“A. E. NORDENSKIÖLD.”

The story of the next three or four months of the Captain's experience was one of cheerful prospects, exuberant expectations, and hopes baffled and defeated. It is needless to go into the details of this first St. Petersburg interlude; a short summary will suffice.

The Captain conferred with M. Sidoroff and other merchants, addressed large audiences of commercial and naval men, to whom he set forth his

plans. At length, the Society for the Encouragement of Commerce and Industry, and the Society for the Encouragement of Naval Communications undertook to supply means for an expedition of a scientific character, and the Captain was expressly commissioned to return to England to obtain two suitable steamers.

On reaching home, he went up and down the country, visiting the chief ports of England, Scotland, and Ireland, in search of the desired vessels. Towards the end of January 1876, he reported to St. Petersburg that he had found at Liverpool a suitable vessel for exploring the Obi, and that it could be bought for about £2,000. He suggested that it would be preferable to build, rather than to buy, a second ship. It could be built and got ready for sea by the following May.

He waited in vain for an authorisation, with a remittance, for the purchase of the ship at Liverpool, and for instructions about the second vessel. Then it came to his ears that some of the merchants were withdrawing from their compact, and were asking one another—If we pay for an expedition, why should we employ an Englishman to lead it?

The leadership was not of the Captain's seeking. In his first address to the merchants, he urged that an expedition should be organised, with a Russian naval officer as leader. He offered to advise, but made no suggestion that he should even

accompany the expedition. The proposal to take the command came entirely from the merchants themselves. On his departure from St Petersburg, the question was warmly discussed in meetings of the merchants, as well as by the Press. One newspaper vigorously opposed the appointment of an Englishman, whilst another, maintaining the opposite view, urged that if Russia had not got any "Wigginses" to the fore, she had better use an English one. One of the leading merchants, speaking in favour of such an appointment, asserted that it was "idle to talk of the nationality of discoverers and inventors; their triumphs were the property of the whole world."

It was not until April that the merchants sent any full and definite communication to the Captain. He then found that the promised subscriptions were ridiculously inadequate for an expedition on the large scale which the merchants had contemplated. This fact, coupled with the intention of the merchants to give him simply the position of pilot, and to appoint a naval officer to the chief command, quickly settled the matter. He decided to have nothing more to do with the affair. Thus ended the first St. Petersburg interlude. High hopes built on fair promises disappeared in a day.

The captain was still owner, or part-owner, of two or three small trading-vessels, which, since the beginning of his Siberian work, had lost more

than they had earned. One of them, the *Lord Raglan*, was docked at Havre for repairs, and here the Captain spent some five or six weeks in February and March, supervising operations, and working hard himself. "I never worked harder," he wrote, "nor was I ever so dirty, from morn till night." A few weeks before the merchants' long-delayed communication reached him, he had received private information from St. Petersburg, which led him to conclude that the Russian proposals would come to nothing. He then seriously meditated abandoning, at least for a time, his projects in the northern seas, and taking a few voyages to South America in the *Lord Raglan*, with the view of replacing, in part, the large sum which he had spent on the voyages of the *Diana* and the *Whim*.

He writes, in a letter to Admiral Glassenoff, "Having spent all my means in the Siberian work, and the Societies having apparently failed me, I am compelled to go to sea and work for money. In thus retiring from an enterprise upon which I had set my whole heart, and have risked my all, my only desire and hope is to see operations carried on by others in a vigorous manner. To any who will do this I would willingly contribute my best advice, and all information I possess regarding my late voyages; for it is not a question with me *who* goes, or *who* does the work, but, rather, that the work is being

carried on. Others may then take the honour of it—that is but an empty reward. Still, there are those who value it, and they are welcome to it."

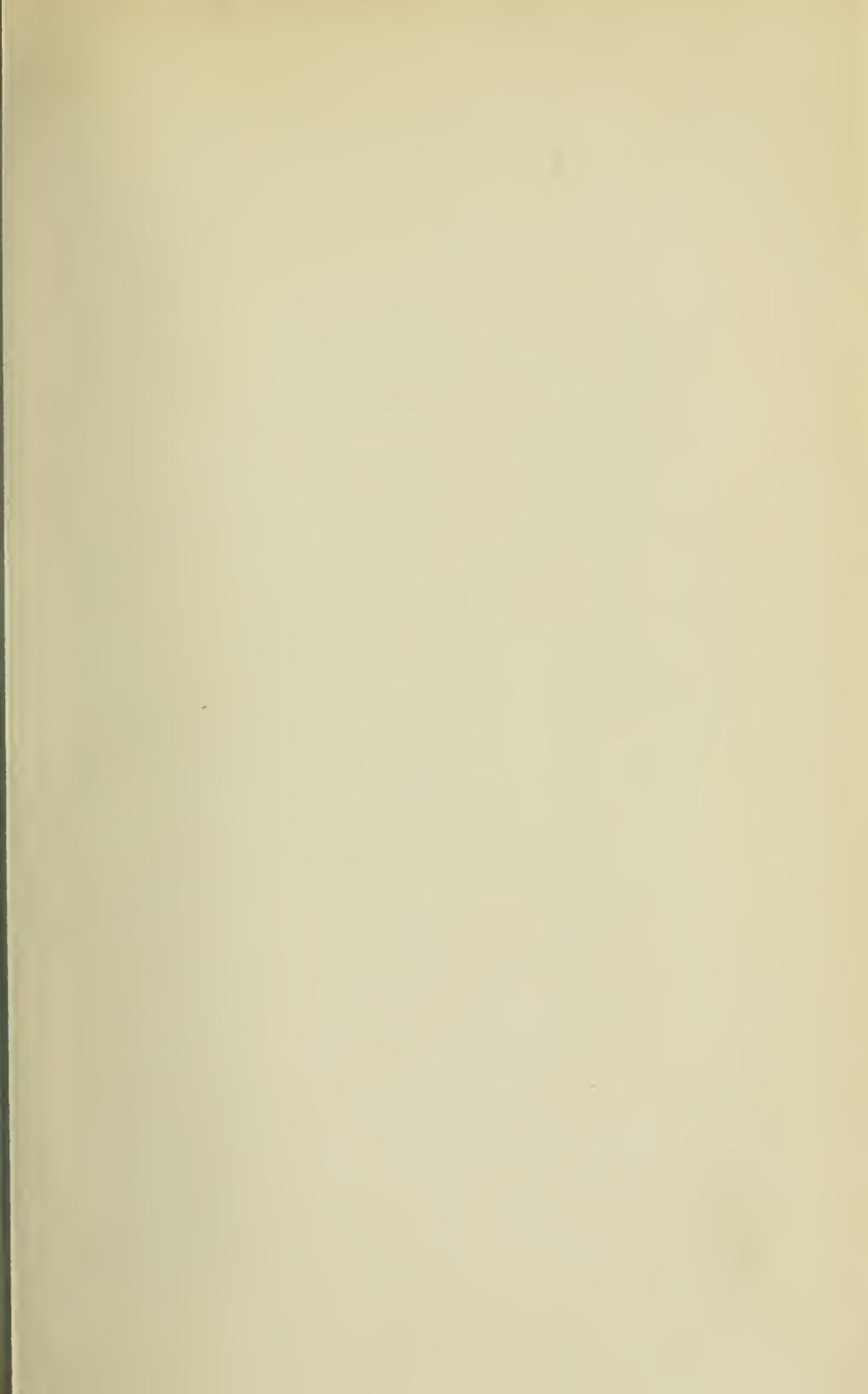
But the Captain was not to retire for years to come, and the little *Lord Raglan* was destined to sail to South America without her owner.

## CHAPTER V

### VOYAGE OF THE *THAMES*

Relative values of “mustard” and “beef”—The Captain buoyant again—Mr Charles L. W. Gardiner—Funds for another voyage—Purchase of the *Thames*—Objects of the voyage—Exploits of the *Glowworm*—Tribute to Sir Hugh Willoughby, Chancellor, and Pet—Offer of reward by M. Sibiriakoff—Dazzling sight at Nova Zembla—Survey of Lutke Island and Muddy Gulf—A visit from natives—A short cut to the Obi—“Dodging about”—Rattling down the Yalnal coast—Blowing a “sneezer”—Trying to enter the Kara River—A family of Samoyedes—At White Island—A “council of war”—In the Yenesci—Difficulties of progress—Driftwood centuries old—In a deserted village—Looking for the promised cargo—At Sverevo—Overreaching natives—Work for the steam-launch—Nearly blown up—Arrival at Kureika—Captain Schwanenberg and his cargo—Farewell to the crew of the *Thames*—Off to Europe by sledge.

ON reaching home again, the Captain was greeted with many expressions of sympathy from men of wealth and influence. “But sympathy without help,” as he once said to a correspondent, “is what mustard is to beef—a mere condiment—useful in





MR. CHARLES L. W. GARDINER.

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its way, but not real food. It's the beef, otherwise help, that, after all, must do the work."

But, in spite of the "mustard" being so conspicuously out of proportion to the "beef," the Captain's spirits seem to have regained their normal buoyancy on his arrival home. The cloud of depression was evidently left at Havre with the *Lord Raglan*.

His prospects brightened, mainly through the encouragement and efforts of an attached and admiring friend. This was Mr Charles L. W. Gardiner, an enthusiastic yachtsman, and one who rightly estimated the Captain's pluck, and the importance of the objects which he had in view in endeavouring to open the northern highway to and from the Siberian rivers. Early in the year (1876) Mr Gardiner had offered him £1,000 towards the expense of another expedition. When the Russian commission was entrusted to him, the Captain set aside the idea of an English expedition, carried out on his sole responsibility. Mr Gardiner now renewed his offer, and did more than this. He communicated with M. Sibiriakoff, a wealthy merchant, urging him to transfer to the Captain the contribution of £1,000, which he had promised to the St. Petersburg Societies for the Russian "Wiggins Expedition." The merchant gladly responded, and sent his contribution to London, to the care of the Editor of the *Times*.

With these funds, and a few small additional gifts, the way for another voyage to the Kara Sea

was made clear financially. Thus encouraged and helped, the Captain prepared for his third venture. He bought the screw-steamer *Thames*, 120 tons register, formerly a clipper schooner, belonging to Berwick. In some respects she was not at all suitable for the task before her, but was the best craft procurable with the funds at the Captain's disposal. He set to work to strengthen her and to remedy defects, as far as it was possible to do so. In a short time she was double-planked with thick elm, and her bows and helm were cased with iron.

A steam-launch was put on board, to enable Wiggins to run up creeks and shallow rivers easily. She carried a crew of nine, including the master, and was provisioned for six months. A large quantity of sample goods, eagerly supplied by Sunderland merchants, was placed on board, for the purpose of influencing business amongst traders on the banks of the rivers.

The Captain's design was to resume his survey of the Muddy Gulf and the Yalmal Peninsula, to survey the Gulf of the Obi, to enter that river, and to run up the Yenesei—a programme daring in its comprehensiveness, seeing that it had to be carried out within the space of about two months. He also intended to bring home a cargo of graphite and other goods, which M. Sidoroff undertook to have ready for him in a vessel somewhere near the mouth of the Yenesei. The proceeds of the sale of the cargo were to be shared equally by the Captain and the merchant.

The *Thames* left Sunderland on July 8, 1876, flying the blue flag of the Royal London Yacht Club, of which the Captain was a member. She had a hard passage to Norway. Gale after gale knocked her about, and, after reaching Hammerfest, two days were occupied in making all right again. At this place the Captain heard of Mr Gardiner. He had called, in his splendid Polar yacht, the *Glowworm*, about a month earlier, on his way to the Kara Sea for a sporting expedition. He succeeded in entering the Kara Sea, *via* the Matochkin Straits. He then sailed northwards to the vicinity of Barentz' winter quarters in the sixteenth century, and recovered many interesting relics connected with that expedition. Sailing south, he passed along the Yalmal coast, nearly touched White Island, and returned home by the Pet Straits. He gave the relics to the Dutch Government, and they were placed in the Museum at Amsterdam, where they now are. The King of the Netherlands presented Mr Gardiner with a handsome gold medal, in recognition of his services.

Leaving Hammerfest on July 24, the *Thames* put into Vardoe, two days later, for letters. The Captain, in his Journal, gives vent to his feelings as he enters Vardoe—"the ancient rendezvous of the grand old discoverers, Sir Hugh Willoughby, Chancellor, Pet, and many others, who were wont to meet here, and refit their crazy crafts, and arrange matters for their coming struggles. One feels not only a great admiration for such an

old place, but even a deep respect, amounting to reverence, on reflecting that it was here our forefathers came who discovered Archangel and the isles of the eastern seas—men who sacrificed their lives in the glorious work of discovery, to benefit their fellow-men."

Before leaving Vardoe, the Captain received a telegram from M. Sibiriakoff, offering a reward of 3,000 roubles should he enter the mouth of the Obi and reach Obdorsk.

On July 26 the *Thames* "started for good," with her head to the east. At 4 A.M., on July 31, "we sighted, in the most magnificent manner, the shores of Nova Zembla. We suddenly emerged from a thick fog into the clearest of atmospheres, and beheld before us, right ahead, a most dazzling sight of splendid mountain scenery, raised, by the refraction of the sun's rays, far beyond its actual height—the golden sun, in all his glory, filling up the background, and gilding the snow-crowned tops. The boisterous weather, and the ship jumping and diving, made us all seem to revel in life. We stood close into the shore, and then had to tack off, the wind being ahead, and no convenient anchorage near. So we are now, at 6 p.m., beating about in a heavy sea and wind, and time is flying fast—but, patience—I must leave it all to Him who alone ordereth all things well."

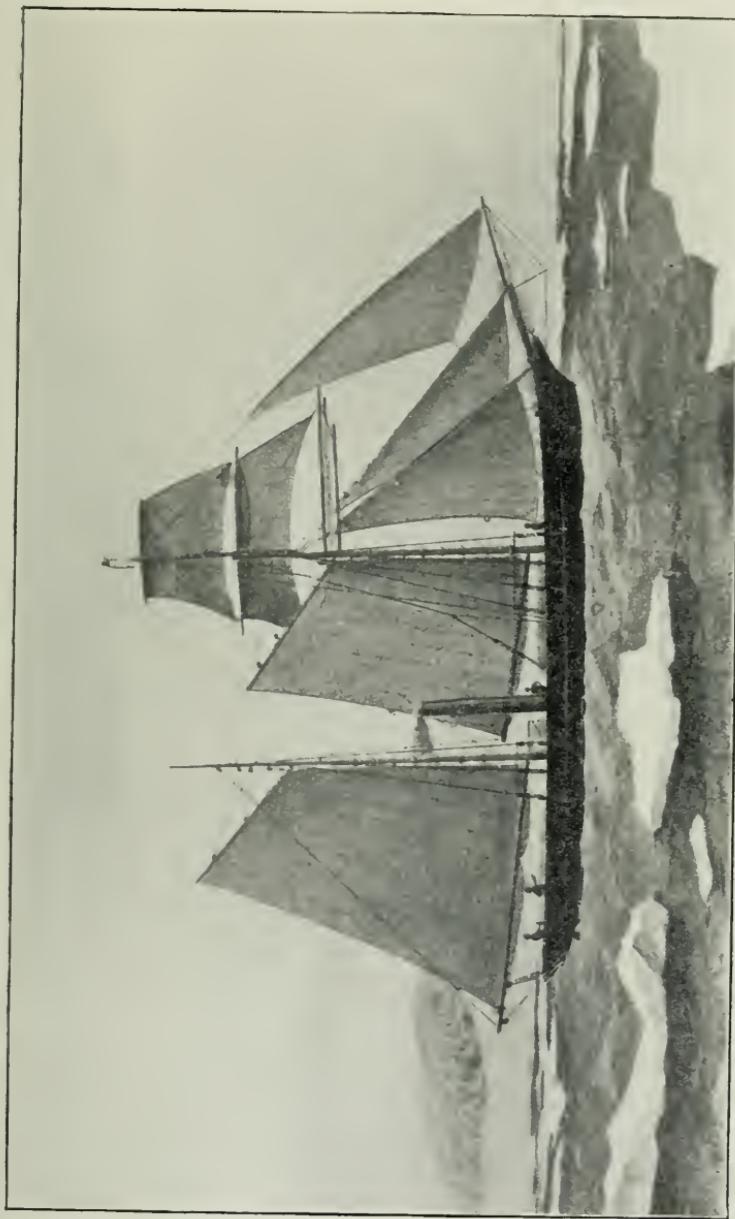
The Journal is not resumed until August 15, and then we learn that on entering the Waigats

Straits no ice was to be seen, but on coming up with the Yalmal coast, the Captain found it "one mass of heavy pack-ice, quite as heavy as when we were here in June with the *Diana*. This at once convinced me that no Obi or Yenesei would be reached this year until at least late in September, if then.

" I therefore made use of my time in surveying Lutke Island and the Muddy Gulf, or more properly Baidarata Bay, hoping to find the river that leads across the Isthmus of Yalmal to the Obi, but we have not yet succeeded. We found the top of the Gulf too full of sand-banks, or rather mud-banks, so that even the screw-launch could not float up it, and a heavy gale from westward forced us to give up further search and come away. At Lutke Island, where the river is said to be by Admiral Lutke, we found the same thing. A gale came on there, and forced us to retreat, and we are now on our way back, with hopes of being able to finish it during the fine weather that is now continuing. We lay there the Sunday before last, and had an enjoyable day, and at last hoisted the Bethel Flag in the Kara Sea. It was a lovely, warm, sunny day, and we had a nice meeting in the little cabin, and, indeed, have had several on the passage out. We were visited by three natives the previous afternoon, as we were steaming in, and they enjoyed the visit much, the fires in the engine-room, the engine at work, etc. Their momentary terror at the steam-whistle, their enjoyment of a hearty tea on deck off biscuits, beef, and 'chia' in true eastern

style, their wonder at everything, and their pleasure at trifling gifts, etc., remain to be described hereafter, as we are full of hard and earnest work. Hands like horn, and so sore, for one finds our little number of men (willing ones too) quite small enough, and encouragement in the way of pull-hauling, and watching in the crow's-nest, quite necessary.

"Yesterday we ran up to the ice again, to see if there was any change in it since we were there a week ago, and found it as hard and thick as ever. We fell in with a Norwegian sloop, whose master came on board. We had a long chat over coffee and broiled ham, at the quiet, dusky midnight hour, when, for the first time this season, we were compelled to light a candle, to see our way clear to do duty to the welcome meal. He has given me some valuable news. It seems that about the same time I was off Goose Land, he was, with Mr Gardiner and Professor Nordenskiöld, passing through the Matochkin Straits, that divide Nova Zembla. Now, I had a great mind to go through them, being so near, but I felt sure, from the accounts of the ice being so late in the White Sea, and from north-east winds having prevailed all the spring and summer, that the Kara Sea would be full of ice, and therefore no passage across to Yenesei or Obi ; so I preferred entering by the Waigats. It seems probable that Mr Gardiner has got through and gone north to hunt, and that Nordenskiöld got through with the Norwegian Captain, and then tried to steer across to the Yenesei, but heavy



THE THAMES ENTERING THE KARA SEA, 1876.

First ocean vessel to ascend the Yenesei.

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pack-ice soon stopped him. He and this Captain (Berg, of the sloop *Strummen*) then came down the inside shore of Nova Zembla southwards, and on to where we have now met, and came to a stop some eight days since. He thinks Nordenskiöld has gone back to the Yugor Straits and will lie there for a week or so, and then try this coast again."

As a matter of fact, the Professor, on this his second voyage to the Kara Sea, proceeded as far as a village near Golchika, on the Yenesei. He was not able to ascend the river, and, leaving at the village a small cargo of samples, started for home. This cargo was taken up to Yeneseisk in the following year by Kitmanov's steamer, the *Nicolai*.

"I am more than ever convinced," the Captain continues, "as I have been from the very first, that the right way for commerce will be by the isthmus, or across the Yalmal land, into the Obi by the ancient route of the Russians who traded three hundred years or more ago; but the point is to find the river. To this end I shall now begin again to survey the locality between Lutke Island and the Baidarata Bay. I am now again closing in with Lutke Island, and should this weather continue, hope to be at work with the screw-launch early tomorrow. I must now to bed, to seize a few winks before the coming night's work, that of getting the ship into a good position. Regular hours of sleep for the master is an unknown pleasure to us here.

"August 19.—Nothing more done at Lutke Island yet. The wind having shifted, and bad

weather set in, we have been compelled to beat about under close-reefed sails these last few days, and what with wind, sea, and rain, things have been the reverse of pleasant. The tedious part is that we are losing such valuable time. The season is so short, that unless we get a week or two of calm weather, nothing can be done towards surveying the shore. Certainly the weather is not what may be called severe, still it is bad enough, with moderate westerly winds, raising a swell which prevents us landing, or working with the launch.

"As soon as I hove up from Lutke Island, I tried to visit an encampment of Samoyedes that I saw a few days ago on another part of the coast, but the wind changed, and we had to leave the spot without finding them. I wish much to get to them, feeling convinced that it is from such people that we must look for finding out the whereabouts of the rivers that lead across to the Obi. I tried the three natives who were on board, but they seemed to know nothing about the Obi. The Captain of the sealing sloop told me, however, that he had six natives on board, who knew all about the rivers, and that in 1874 he saw some who said they came from close to Obdorsk. If this is really the case, then there must still be a road for boats, for they were in two large boats, fitted up for walrus- and seal-fishing. It is surely impossible that they ever came down the Gulf and round by White Island, especially as that year was a close one, from the ice on the coast, and nothing less than a

steamer, such as the *Diana*, could have got through it so far.

“ We are still dodging off Lutke Island, hoping that fine weather may soon permit of our landing and examining the channels. At present there seems little hope of a change for the better. The wind has settled into a wet quarter to the southward, so I fear we must have patience and wait. Should it continue much longer, I shall be obliged to make use of the time in going again to the ice to see if it has changed. No doubt another month will bring about the desired change, when the north-east winds set in ; but then it is too late for us to try the Obi, as we are not provisioned for wintering, nor have we winter clothing for the men. I fear nothing will ever be done to find a passage, except by a party well equipped with reindeer sledges, etc., landing on these shores early in summer, and working their way all round by the coast-line, and so ferreting out every river there may be on this side, and with a steam-launch, or boats, tracing the most likely ones to their source inland. If I could get hold of a lot of natives, there would still be time for me to do much of this yet. But without their help for sledgeing and rein-deer, it would be madness to attempt the inland exploration.

“ August 20.—Since writing the above a great change has taken place, for a breeze set in from the south-east, and off we set to seek, first, the camp on the south Yalmal coast, and found it had left, thence round a headland to seek for the

river; but shoal-water once more shut us out. Thence to Lutke Island, to try if there is an entrance at the north end. Shoal-water again prevented our doing anything. And now (3 P.M.) we are rattling away down the coast with a north-east wind, which, I fear, will not permit us reaching the ice before it gets into the north. I want to have another look at the ice, and should it be tight on the land, I fear we must give it up for this year. A few hours of this wind will tell. I hope it may stand good.

“August 21.—To the northward the ice-blink is of great expanse, showing that the sea is comparatively full of ice to the northward of about parallel 70° N.

“8 P.M.—Blowing a hard norther, or, as sailors vulgarly call it, a ‘sneezer’—coming as it does from the ice, and now being close up to it, in fact amongst it, makes it cold, very cold, for our poor ‘Jacks.’ Now they begin to feel and to have a small idea of what a winter here must be like, when in summer it is so stinging. We are now lying hove-to under close-reefed sails, awaiting the result of this gale. It may set the ice off the east shore, but I fear it is too northerly to do so. In that case, as soon as the weather clears up and moderates, I shall go down to the south shore and examine it as well as I can, and try to find a harbour there. I hear from Captain Berg, the Norwegian, that the Kara River has an entrance of three fathoms deep. If so,

doubtless it would make a good port for ships to lie in whilst loading."

The weather turning fine, the Captain took his ship down to the Kara River, to see if, with a good entrance and harbour, it could be made a centre of trade.

"We came to anchor on the 24th, and set to work with the steam-launch. As we were about to start, a native boat came off, with three men and a boy as crew. They had been fishing all night, and had a grand stock of salmon and trout. They at once tossed on board about two dozen splendid fish, but seemed shy of coming themselves. Finally, however, after giving them biscuits, etc. (they would not eat meat), they plucked up courage and came. Of course they were astonished at all they saw, and gave us to understand that the ship could get into the 'Kara Tom' as they called it. So the mate went ahead of the ship with the launch, but had not gone far before the water shoaled, and we had to anchor. He then spent all the morning trying, with the natives, to find a passage in, but all to no purpose, there being hardly water for the launch. In the afternoon I took the launch, and succeeded in finding a passage of about ten feet into the entrance of the river on the south side, but we could not get far in. On shore was a Samoyedes' tent, so I landed, hoping that the owners might be able to convey me across the isthmus to Obdorsk; but on getting to them I found they knew nothing about

that part, but traversed the Kara River up to the Petchora. The family consisted of father, mother, son and his wife, and two bricks of children—boys about eleven years old—such sturdy little chaps! They wanted to barter skins, dresses, etc., for my sea-boots, but these could not be spared. I gave them a red silk pocket-handkerchief for some fish they had given us, and at once the mother put it on her head in true eastern fashion, at the same time letting down her braided hair, which was tightly tied with red flannel thongs—and well the dame looked. We made them understand that we had a ship outside, and could give them things if they would come off. They demurred, and pointed to the western sky, which signified there was bad weather at hand. We were of the same opinion, so bade them farewell, and set off for the ship, arriving on board about 8 P.M.

“It is very tantalising that a ship cannot enter this fine sheet of water extending some twenty miles in circumference—quite a lake. We could see the water and an island, but could not get to it. From this lake the Kara River runs south some eighty miles, and joins the Petchora by a small lake, so that easy communication can be held even with Moscow, by taking the route which Count Wilczec took from the mouth of the Petchora.

“We had not been long on board, when off came the family, minus only the son’s wife. The little bricks were pulling at the oars, and the old

lady had on her best dress and another gay handkerchief on her head, showing that they, somehow, barter with the Russians. In my handkerchief she had a splendid lot of ground berries like raspberries, and these she at once gave to me. They soon commenced exchanging ; two puppies, skins, bird-skins, boots, hoods, etc., for which we gave them salt, rye meal, knives, needles, and red cloth, with which the lady was delighted, showing us how she meant to use it in decorating skin dresses.

"This reception was just over, when another lot came on board, from a much larger boat, full of salmon nets—evidently come out for the night to fish. They were the finest and largest set of men I have seen. Indeed, most of them were giants, over six feet, though some were youths of not more than twenty, and so fat, sleek, and comely-looking. They had much of the Russian type depicted in their countenances, and some had quite flaxen hair. They were astonished at everything ; commenced to barter skins, etc., also two foxes, one of which Miss Chang has this morning settled. It is now fastened to her neck, and she has to sleep with it for at least one night. Probably this, with a reasonable chastisement at the time, will have the right effect ; indeed, already it must be so, for, strange to say, the other fox has taken up its quarters close to her nose, probably thinking the other is but sleeping, and Chang bears it all, never daring even to look at fox No. 2."

Several days passed, during which a great deal

of hard work was done—re-surveying the mouth of the Yurubei River, re-crossing the Gulf, surveying the south shore, and examining an island, where a good harbour was found. Then a favourable wind sprang up, and the *Thames* steamed away northward, reaching White Island on September 3, the Captain's birthday and wedding-day. For about a month the *Thames* had been toiling in the Muddy Gulf, sailing or steaming up and down, surveying the east shore and then the south, crossing and re-crossing. Though full of useful results, positive and negative, this month's experience must have been monotonous to all concerned.

The monotony was now at an end, and the real excitement of the voyage was about to begin. The Captain was in doubt. Should he return home, or go on to the Obi or the Yenesei? The season was getting late, the nights were dark, gales would probably be prevalent, and the cold of winter was at hand. He was determined not to go forward without the hearty co-operation of his crew. So he called a "council of war" in his cabin, at which all hands attended.

"In a few words I put it to them whether we should proceed or not. The wind was against us, so we were losing no time by stopping the ship here until it changed. Added to this, the engineer informed me that some of our boiler tubes had got so leaky that we could go no further till they were caulked. To attempt to stem the currents, which

would be against us after rounding this island, without steam and with a head wind would have been folly. It was most annoying to be stopped at such an important juncture—but patience must have her perfect work.

“ I told the crew about the 3000 roubles offered by Mr Sibiriakoff for our getting to Obdorsk, and that it was my intention from the first to give them a thousand amongst them, as a reward, should we succeed. I also showed them the temptation of at least trying the Yenesei without such a reward. I showed them that in all probability—nay, for a certainty—we must winter there or at the Obi. I gave them until this evening to consider the question well. They will give me their answer at 7 P.M., when we shall be all mustered in the cabin. I felt it to be my duty to consult the wishes of such a willing crew. The risks that must be run to survey the Gulf of the Obi, and the hardships to be endured, may perhaps be very great. As it is, we have had plenty of hard work. In proof of which statement I am not ashamed to show the palms of my hands, and this is the reason that I have not kept a better Journal. What with watching in the crow’s-nest, much heaving of the lead, being mis-timed, and constantly on the severe watch, the brain racked with deep anxiety—all this makes a regular Journal impossible.”

There is no further entry in the Journal until September 26, by which date he had worked his way up the Yenesei as far as the Brekhoffsksy

Islands. On that day we find this important announcement :

“ In the mighty Yenesei. Riding at anchor under the islands. Latitude  $70^{\circ} 30' N.$  A hard gale compelled us to bring up on Sunday afternoon. This is indeed a great change of time and place since my last entry, and I must now briefly relate what has taken place.

“ My crew, with the exception of one or two only, decided that it would be our duty to see what the Obi was like, and, if possible, ascend it; if not possible, then to try the Yenesei, should circumstances prove favourable.

“ As soon as the boiler was put in order, away we went. The wind dead against us, we steamed and steamed, and anchored when the current was too strong; and thus we battled away several days, the head-wind increasing. At last, after getting nearly as far as we got in the *Diana*, and finding the current stronger, and no prospect of the wind subsiding for many days, I decided to run for the Yenesei. We therefore stood across the Gulf, and kept towards the east land. We soon came upon an island not on the chart. Then we got into difficulties through finding the land not the same as the chart, and had to anchor for the night. After this we succeeded in running along the ill-delineated land, and, through thick fog, rain, and a whole gale from the south, pressed onwards.

“ At last we found ourselves completely land-locked, and obliged to anchor amongst low sandy

islands, shoals, and promontories. The weather being so thick, we could not get our position by sun, moon, or stars, and so two days passed in this most dangerous locality. Then we got out, and, at about 8 P.M. on the 9th, we made out the islands and high mainland on the left-hand shore of the Yenesei Gulf, where Nordenskiöld has placed Dickson's Haven. Next day (Sunday) it came on a whole gale from the west, with snow, sleet, and frost. A tremendous sea obliged us to heave-to, instead of running for the river. To have done the latter would have been madness, not knowing how soon we might be thrown upon a shoal or treacherous sand-bank.

"At 4 P.M. we found that we were fast closing in with the islands, which appeared high, wild, and rocky, with high and mountainous land in the background—what may be termed a magnificent-looking land, without a particle of snow upon it except on the highest peaks. What a glorious land for the bear, the reindeer, the wolf, etc.! On nearing the islands, we found to our surprise that the vessel would easily manage to fetch to windward sufficiently for obtaining shelter under one of them, should there be a good depth of water. The risk was great to run amongst such a lot of rocky, iron-bound islands; but, then, keeping the sea, under such serious circumstances, was also a great, if not the greatest risk, for the waves were now running mountains high—rain, fog, and sleet prevailing, with every sign of this heavy gale

increasing to a hurricane during the long night that was now fast coming on.

"The ship, under these trials, though behaving admirably, like a perfect little life-vessel, was still liable to be driven among still greater dangers before daylight, should shoals abound to leeward. With no chart to guide us as to the probabilities or otherwise of such dangers, and with our late experiences vividly before us, we decided, if possible, to gain shelter under the lee of one of the islands. At 6 P.M. we were close in under a small island, and, under steam, soon succeeded in smoothing our water, and ultimately anchored in eight fathoms on a muddy or clay bottom, close to the shore, a deep little cove with a sandy beach being right ahead of the vessel. Here we had shelter from W.S.W. round to the northward and eastward, with every appearance of being able even to enter the little cove, but the wild state of the elements, and darkness coming on, prevented us attempting this. At midnight we were compelled to let go both anchors and for two days continued riding out this terrific gale.

"Our ship had hard work to accomplish it safely, although moored not more than a cable's length from the rocks, which were a providential protection to us. The weather during the day (September 14) was more moderate, and we decided to haul the ship into the cove, and ballast her if possible, for the coals were now fast disappearing, and ballast must be obtained to make

her safe. During the morning we landed, and found that the cove was deep and wide enough for the ship to lie safely in whilst the wind remained in the same quarter—that is, from N.W. With our powerful steam-winches we soon weighed anchor, and steamed into the cove, and all hands, Skipper included, set to work immediately to load the boats with the fine large stones from the beach. By 5 P.M. the ship was well ballasted, and in a safe condition to battle with the wintry storms once more.

“This little cove is a fine harbour, with shelter from the south, round by the west to the north and east and E.S.E. It is nearly land-locked. The island is about two miles long, by one broad, having another cove on the west side, directly opposite to this one. On the north-east side it is very irregular, and apparently connected by shoals to the next inlying island, which is much larger. As viewed from the highest point, some 350 feet, there seemed to be an immense group of large, bold islands, stretching far away along the coast towards the Yenesei. There must be many splendid anchorages amongst them, and any amount of game, for on this small island we saw large deer, but had no time to pursue them. I tried a long shot at a splendid large fellow. He was so unaccustomed to the gun that he actually stood still and looked towards the place where the sound came from, and continued thus until no fewer than five shots had been fired. But he

was too far off, and as there was no possibility of our getting nearer without being seen, we gave it up, and exhibited ourselves to the astonished gaze of the splendid creature. We had been hidden by a projecting rock. As soon as he saw us, away he bounded in a trice up the cliffs and over the island to the opposite shore. He had with him his dam and a fine young one.

“The driftwood on this island is something wonderful. At the head of the two little coves it lies piled, looking like high hills, and some has evidently lain there for centuries. Well may driftwood be found on the shores of Spitzbergen and East Greenland. I named the cove ‘Ballast Cove,’ in remembrance of our quick and valuable ballasting here.

“At midnight, on the 14th, we were once more under weigh, and, with all sails set and full steam, we proceeded direct for the Yenesei. The clear weather showed us island after island as we ran past them, now partially covered with snow from the effects of the late storm—many of them not less than eight or ten miles long, with fine bays and good-looking anchorages in them. As morning dawned the breeze increased. On, on we sped, the high, bold mainland leading far away on our port or left hand, the water, now shoaling gradually from fifteen fathoms in the offing to nine, and, becoming very muddy, showed us that we were approaching a large river. Still, the current was

not so strong down as one would have expected from such an immense river.

"On flew the little craft, like a bird let loose, or, perhaps better, like a bird seeking shelter, for, being now so late in the season, it would soon become necessary either to bear up for home or to seek refuge for the winter in the Yenesei. Should Captain Schwanenberg have the graphite close down to the mouth of the river, say at Krestowsky or Golchika, there would be ample time to take it in, and sail for home; for at the rate we were bowling along we should be in the river that night, or early in the morning at furthest, and then in two days we could take in all the cargo. We also expected that the natives along the coast, at least as far as Krestowsky, which we were now fast approaching, would have been informed of the expeditions of Nordenskiöld and ourselves, and probably instructed to look out for and assist us.

"At noon we were abreast of Krestowsky, but saw no signs of life on the land, so shaped our course up outside the island lying off that shore, still keeping nine fathoms by the lead. As we approached the island, we observed a pole stuck up, and we thought this must surely mean people on the look-out for us. Closing up with it, we found no signs of life, but, instead, immense heaps or hills of driftwood and timber. Some of the largest trees I ever saw were heaped together in the greatest confusion, far above high-water mark, and some had evidently been lying there for

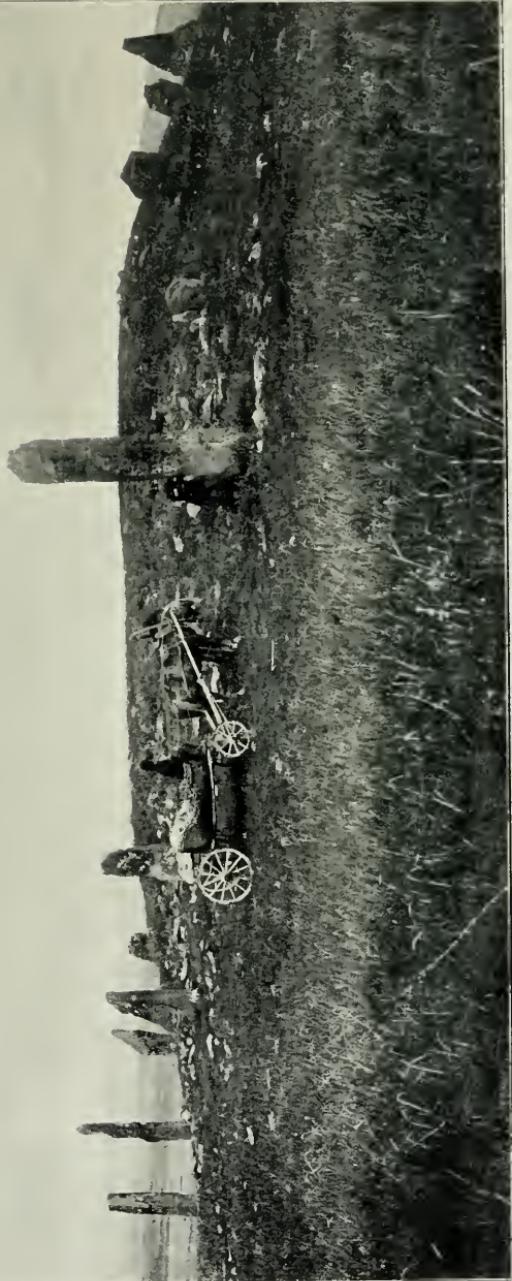
many years. One part of the island, where it is very shallow and nearly divided into two, is entirely made up of drift timber. Such a scene we never before witnessed.

" 4 P.M.—Coming towards another island, with several others in the offing, we suddenly shoaled water to three and two fathoms. We hauled off, and passed outside of it near to the others, which were high and bold, soon deepening our water to six fathoms. On we ran as fast as our steam and sails could propel us, averaging some eight or nine knots an hour. The weather, clear and beautiful, showed us the high land, still reaching far away on our left, and any one would have said now that we were running along the high main shores of the Mediterranean, and not entering the estuary of an Arctic River. All was sunshine and very lovely, only the distant hills covered with snow. The sun shone powerfully. Thermometer 40° to 45° in the shade, temperature of water the same.

" We came to anchor for the night close under the high headland of Cape Schantsky, the weather having changed to heavy showers of snow and sleet, with light wind from south-west. At 4 A.M. we were again under weigh. Steamed on towards the mouth of the river, keeping five fathoms by the lead. The sun soon appeared, and we made good heading close to the shore. We sighted a village ahead, at the point or entrance of the river itself—probably Soposhnagorka, as laid down on Nordenskiöld's chart. Soon we distinguished the wooden

[To face p. 105,

ANCIENT GRAVES IN SIBERIA.





crosses above graves. At 9 A.M. were abreast of the village, consisting of some six huts, built in the Russian style. Immense piles of drift-wood on the shore, but no signs of life.

"We thought that Captain Schwanenberg must have been down with his vessel thus far, so decided to land and examine the huts for records. 'He may have been here,' we thought, 'and, giving us up, have returned to Dudinka.' Soon we were struggling over the immense drift-trees, some of them monsters. We were surprised at times to find ourselves suddenly sinking up to the waist, through the rotten timber giving way. It must have been there for centuries.

"At last we reached a hut, to find it roofless; probably it had not been inhabited for many years. We slipped on to the others, and with the same result. Outside were lying about large troughs, made out of the drift-trees. Being soaked with oil, they must have been used for seal-blubber. One hut had been a boiling-house, but in a very primitive fashion. The place was evidently a disused seal-fishing station. We found no records, and soon retraced our steps, passing some graves of most peculiar construction. The place seemed well adapted for a summer town, for loading and unloading ships from Europe. It has a deep bay on the south side, in which ships could ride at anchor, safe from all winds that blow from the sea. Those that blow from the river could not harm vessels, though a heavy gale from the south might prevent work

from being carried on. To meet this difficulty, a mole could easily be constructed to shelter vessels and lighters. The date we landed here was September 3 (Russian calendar). We took away some trophies—a stool, an old grindstone, and a two-bladed paddle for a canoe. Query—how many years had these things been lying there, untouched by man?

“Steamed away up the river. Warm sunshine. We hoped we should not go far without meeting some one who could tell us of Captain Schwanenberg and the graphite cargo. If we came across the ship within another day or two, there would still be ample time to take the cargo on board, and rattle away home with it.

“About two and a half hours’ steaming brought us to Sverevo, and, for the first time, we discovered signs of life. We soon descried a man running down to the beach, then another and another. They hastily launched a boat, and were soon pulling with might and main towards the ship. One was standing up, evidently anxious lest we should pass by without seeing them. ‘No fear! old gentleman,’ we thought; ‘we want you more than you want us, for you will doubtless be able to give us information about our cargo.’

“They were alongside in a trice—two Samoyedes, and a Russian in a velvet suit. One of the natives turned out to be a woman. On coming on board they made their desire quite plain, namely, to barter. But we found their prices too high, and

were compelled to decline negotiations. Then we began to interrogate them, in broken (very broken) Russian, as to their knowledge of Schwanenberg, graphite, etc. The only answer was a vacant, wide-mouthed stare. Had they seen another 'parahkhot' (steamer) go up before us? 'Neyete, neyete' ('No, no'). Had they heard of Nordenskiöld? 'Neyete, neyete.' Finding we could get nothing out of these bad bargains, we soon cut the conversation short by giving them some presents, and saying 'Prahshchah'ite' ('Good-bye'). They jumped into their crazy craft, and, after much bowing, paddled away in great glee, probably arising from the fact that they had not parted with a single article in return for the presents. These were the first natives to show an overreaching disposition. All those who boarded us in the Kara Sea were most scrupulous to make as good a return as they got.

"On we steamed. Evening soon closed in, and a head - wind, springing up, compelled us to anchor for the first time in the Yenesei River. The first British flag that had ever flown on this mighty river was hauled down at sunset. We had hoisted it in the afternoon on perceiving the natives.

"At daylight on September 18 we were at it again, steaming against a fresh head-wind, which ultimately veered three points to the south-west, enabling us to set our fore and aft sails. Thus we made fair headway against the current. But these goodly prospects did not long continue. Just before

noon we suddenly shoaled to three fathoms, but soon found deeper water.

“We went down to dinner with the hope of keeping on, and thus soon reaching the islands about twenty-five miles off, where natives are known to exist, and hearing something about our cargo and Captain Schwanenberg. But, alas! we had not sat down more than five minutes, when we heard the cry of the leadsman, ‘Three fathoms.’ We rushed on deck, to find the ship in not more than two fathoms. Stopping, turning astern, and putting ship about was the work of a few moments. She had stirred up the mud with her propeller. The crow’s-nest had to be visited, with the hope of picking out a road; but, for all we could do—going from side to side of the river, not less than four miles broad there—it was of no use. No more than three or two and a half fathoms could be found. We decided to anchor for the night, and hoist out the steam-launch, hoping that in the morning the mate might be able, with her, to guide the ship up.

“By breakfast-time (September 19) steam was got up in the launch, ready for a start after the meal. But misfortune still patronised us. The second engineer, whose duty it was to go in the launch, discovered, just as steam was fully up, that he had forgotten something. Leaving mate, carpenter, and an able seaman seated in the launch, all ready to push off, he jumped on board and dived into his cabin for what he wanted. Soon the

steam began to roar from the safety-valve of the little boiler. From 36 lbs. pressure, it was soon up to 45 lbs. Then we heard shouts from the boat—‘I say, are you a-comin’ afore this thing busts?’ Then the mate, who considered himself quite equal to the occasion, from his knowledge of engines, made a dash at the safety-valve—‘to ease it,’ as he said. And, sure enough, he did ease it, for with a touch off flew the top, and out rushed the steam. Up the side of the ship flew the carpenter and the A.B. Down into the stern dropped the mate, to behold and to contemplate, at a safe distance, the effects of his handiwork. Down jumped the second engineer, just in time to open furnace-doors and draw the fires, and thus prevent further mischief.

“This job took us till late in the afternoon to put right. At three o’clock all was again in readiness, and off went the launch, with her gallant crew, to search for a passage close in shore. Soon it came on to snow so heavily that she was lost sight of, and nothing more was seen of her until her return at six o’clock.”

With the aid of the launch a safe channel was discovered, and the *Thames* sailed with ease to Dudinka. Thence she proceeded, some 250 miles, to the entrance of a little tributary of the Yenesei, named the Kureika, about 900 miles from the mouth of the great river. She arrived at the Kureika on October 18. Of course it was too late in the season for the Captain to take his

ship home, even though a cargo had been ready. He determined, therefore, to leave her at the entrance to the Kureika until the breaking up of the ice in the spring. He succeeded in placing the *Thames* alongside the bank, and in two or three days she was securely fastened to her position by ice. The crew were then comfortably housed on shore.

The Captain made an excursion, in a sledge, drawn by reindeer, to a copper mine, some seventy miles from Kureika village. On his return journey he was overtaken by a blinding snowstorm. The driver lost his way, and the reindeer were almost exhausted with stumbling and slipping in the deep snow. When matters were looking very serious, one of the Dolgans, who inhabit this part of Siberia, suddenly appeared, mounted on an elk. Quickly divining the predicament of the travellers, he led them to his large tent, a short distance away, where a fire was burning, which lit up the faces of the man's family, and of a number of other persons who had taken refuge in the hospitable dwelling. A kid was killed, and a thick soup made of portions of it, whilst the Dolgan's wife brought forward a copper kettle and brewed tea for all the company. The order and decency prevailing compared favourably with what might have been found in many homes of English towns.

"The little children," says the Captain, "crept from their warm fur sleeping-bags, climbed upon my knees, and played quietly with the buttons on

my coat. After supper, the women industriously applied themselves to embroidery and bead-work. The older women strung the different-coloured beads, whilst the girls festooned them gaily upon the sleeves and breasts of the tunics worn by the tribe. A warm and comfortable bed was made up for me, and the next morning my host insisted upon supplying me with fresh reindeer, out of his herd of some five hundred, and driving me himself into Kureika in his own sledge. He refused to accept the smallest remuneration for all he had done." It was this Dolgan who picked out from his herd four milk-white reindeer as a present for Queen Victoria, and four black ones for the Prince of Wales, and asked the Captain to convey them to England. Unfortunately, the Captain was unable to comply with his request, having to return home overland.

Captain Schwanenberg joined Wiggins at Kureika at the beginning of November. It seems that he had taken his schooner, the *Aurora Borealis*—containing a cargo of graphite—amongst the islands in the estuary of the Yenesei, but had failed to meet with the *Thames*. Having left his ship and crew in winter quarters at one of the Brekhoffsky Islands, he had come up to Kureika to discuss the situation of affairs with Wiggins. The two captains decided at last to proceed on sledges over the now frozen river to the town of Yeneseisk, about 800 miles from Kureika, and then go on to St Petersburg. Wiggins' main object in returning to Europe was

to make another attempt to rouse leading commercial men to support his ocean-route projects. The farewell scene between Wiggins and his crew can be told in the Captain's own words.

"The sledges arrive, and the packing begins. A bright thought strikes Captain S——: 'We had better have a cover, for the cold will probably be severe, especially at night.' The thermometer now shows more than 35° below zero; it is marked only to that minimum, and the quicksilver is down to the bulb, hard and fast; so the frost is probably more than 40°. A cover is soon rigged up, consisting of the canvas hood of the steam-launch and the iron hoops. The sledge now starts for the ship, to take in the last portion of luggage—my portmanteau. We dive below to our snug little cabin, for a final refresher of coffee and biscuit.

"We glance round at the wee cabin, which has so long and so faithfully sheltered us in storm and in sunshine—a stroke on poor old Chang, who is comfortably snoozing beneath the table, after the last hearty meal from her master's hand—at least the last for this voyage—and a pat on the head of little, funny, faithful Kara, and we go on deck, and round the bows of the ship towards the sledge. We pause, and, unobserved, lay our hand on the scroll-work of our gilt figure-head, and breathe a prayer that He may see fit to preserve the ship and all her crew until our return.

"The word from Captain S—— is given that all is ready. The crew are gathered closely round,

to receive a last look and a shake of the hand. We hardly seem to realise the fact that we are about to part for a long time, perhaps five months. I give them an earnest exhortation to be careful to keep themselves in health by two or three hours' daily work, and in the early evenings to employ their time in reading or study, or in mending and making clothes, and now and then to take a scalding bath from the good old copper. I also exhort them to be careful in their behaviour towards the natives, especially as Captain S—— has taken so much care to impress upon the natives the fact (?) that we English are 'angels' as compared with them; that we are kind, self-sacrificing, never cheat, etc., etc. My last word is to urge the crew not to neglect the good Bethel Flag, but to let it fly every Sunday from the flagstaff opposite the house. Then we grip each others' hands, and Captain S—— and I dive into the sledge.

"We start at a fast trot. In a few moments our driver pulls up suddenly, evidently bewildered by the unusual sounds proceeding from the ship, sounds that he never before heard. 'Hark! what is the matter?' calls out Captain S——. 'Listen! they want us back surely — we must have forgotten something.' Soon the awful sound comes booming along over the still, smooth ice — a deep, sonorous, hearty English cheer — then another, making, with the one gone before, the usual three cheers of the British tar. We throw

back the sledge-cover, and send three in return. Then one more from the ship. By this time the driver realises that we have been merely saying ‘good-bye’ in the English fashion, and then whisks his single rein over the back of his leading reindeer, and off we start.”

## CHAPTER VI

### SLEDGE-RIDE TO EUROPE

Accidents—Attractions of a post-house—A breakdown—A lazy driver—The British flag at the fore—Officialism at Turukhansk—A woman driver—Forest scenery—Welcome at Yeneseisk—Reception by the Governor-General of Siberia—Advantages of a Government pass—Krasnoiarsk—Entertainment at Omsk—Shipbuilding at Tiumen—Crossing the Urals—Nishni Novgorod—Reception at Moscow—Arrival at St Petersburg—Benefits of teetotalism—Frozen spirits—The Captain reports his voyage to the Society for Naval Communications—Elected Life Member—Presentation by the Society—The Captain's address to the Society for the Encouragement of Commerce—On the navigation of the Obi—Reasons for preferring the Isthmus route—Fails to rouse the Russian merchants—Stranded—“A friend in need”—Leaves St Petersburg with “nothing but thanks and Life-Memberships.”

THE Captain's description of his sledge journey to Yeneseisk is too lively reading to be omitted. After running for about seven miles, the deer were allowed to stop to take wind.

“We are soon off again, and when we are some three versts from the post-station a break-down

occurs. After a little pulling, tugging, and shouting to the patient animals, we start again. Alas! our progress is soon suddenly stopped with a loud crack at the fore part of our sledge. Something has indeed broken now.

“‘What is the matter now?’ shouts Captain S——.

“‘Oh, dear! oh, dear!’ wails the poor driver, adding other emphatic utterances. Then he comes with the news that the bow of the sledge and the trace have broken.

“‘It must be God who has done it—oh, indeed it must!’ mutters the driver.

“‘God, indeed!’ shouts Captain S——. ‘God keeps things good that are made good and strong at first, and He helps only those who do things right. You knew that we had a big sledge; then why did you not see that all was good and strong?’

“In a little while things are lashed together, and we set off once more. We cover a short distance, and then the deer stop. A lot of water has got on to the ice and on to the sledge. The sledge sticks fast, and bang goes another trace.

“‘Oh dear! oh dear! oh dear!’ moans the poor driver.

“‘Whatever is the matter with you now?’ shouts Captain S——.

“‘Oh, oh! it must be the devil, then, who has done all this. It must indeed be the devil.’

“‘Get along with you!’ shouts the Captain, after a hearty laugh at the fellow’s simplicity.

"We bundle out of our dripping shelter into the pure, dry, but severely frosty air. We start to walk up to the post-house, but, on the sledge overtaking us, hang on to the back part of it, and are soon pulled up to the door of the house. We bolt into the place to save our frozen faces, for the drippings that bedewed them whilst in the sledge were instantly frozen when we emerged into the open air.

"And now we are standing at the end of the travellers' long room, and after throwing off our heavy reindeer-skin, we sit down to draw breath and look round. We recognise some merchants who were on board the *Thames* a few days ago. They greet us, and then we drink the refreshing glass of tea brought by the landlady, and all is well.

"About 9 P.M., after writing up our log, we retire for the night to the skins placed on the floor, leaving our merchant friends to enjoy their rather noisy game of cards. The warmth of these houses and the absence of any draughts is remarkable. Although it is rather nice to lounge about in one's shirt-sleeves, yet the situation has its drawbacks. A suffocating sensation is experienced, and not over-pleasant smells greet the nostrils. The occupants of the room number about a dozen men, and four or five women, and several naked children are flitting about, screaming, shouting, crying, and squalling. A number of cats must also be reckoned. So, on the whole, it is easy

to imagine that a Russian post-station is not the sweetest paradise in the world.

“Resuming our journey at nine in the morning, we reached the next post-house at four, to find that no reindeer were to be had. So we were obliged to stay there for the night. The inhabitants of the village had a bad reputation; nevertheless we had a shake-down of straw, and were quite comfortable, saving a fear of the approach of certain small wingless enemies.

“We are astir before daybreak, and find that no reindeer have arrived yet. Captain S—— gets impatient, declares that the people know where to get reindeer, and are waiting for the offer of more money. At last we offer an extra rouble if they will get us horses at once. Result—horses are collected in a few minutes, and in half an hour we make a start. All goes well for a time, and then the wretched horses break down, and we are landed. The snow is deep, and the ice bad and rough. A lecture to the driver from Captain S—— makes no impression. We decide we must ‘do’ the rest on foot—a serious undertaking, encumbered as we are with heavy garments.

“We head the sledge, and soon find that we may head it if we choose, for, on looking round, we see no signs of the driver. Captain S—— uses his stentorian voice, and at last we discern the fellow making a move. We wait, sitting on a snow-clad ice-block. As he draws in sight, we can see him coolly riding in the sledge, and the fine little boy,

who accompanied him as outrider on the first horse, walking at the side of the animals, urging them on. This is too much for the mercurial Captain S——. He stalks off to meet the driver, with a fierce expression on his face, which the driver observes. Forthwith he pops out of the sledge, and trudges on behind, as if he had been walking for twenty miles. The Captain contents himself with a threat as to what he would do if he catches the driver at that game again."

At this point in the Journal Captain Wiggins declares that he must henceforth be content with "notes," for it is quite impossible to keep a "proper log," owing to the dim light in the houses, and his condition of fatigue and weariness. He is much impressed with the fine entrance to one of the villages—"lovely trees—what beauties for a gentleman's park! what would be given in England for such a drive, winding in and out, to a mansion—evergreens, silver birch, etc."

When half a mile from Turukhansk, he stopped to hoist the British flag at the fore part of the sledge. "Old driver delighted." "Off we shoot into the village—bells tinkling, dogs barking, and met by other dogs, barking, and falling to our rear."

At this place he was detained five days by the over-officious Governor, who seized samples of goods carried by the travellers, on the pretence that the laws of Russia had been infringed by giving away presents on the journey to villagers who had done small services. The Governor got his deserts, for,

on his conduct being reported at Yeneseisk to the Governor-General of Siberia, he was superseded, and orders were given for the release of the seized goods, free of all duty.

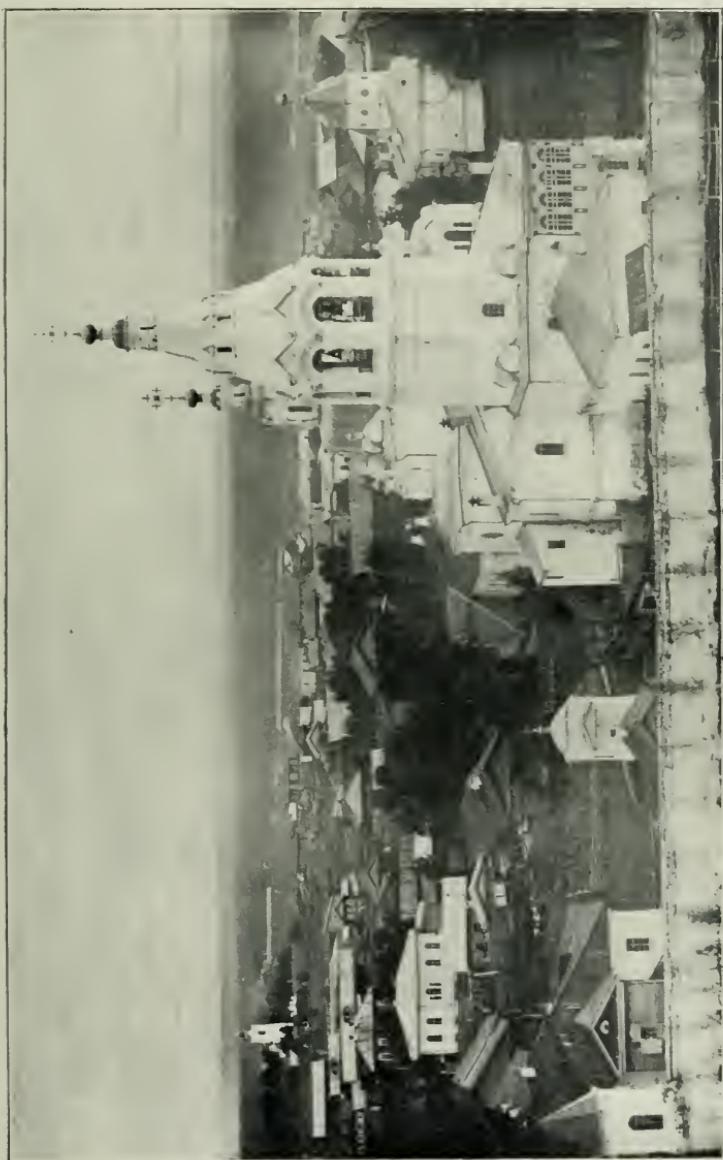
“We proceed fast from village to village, a messenger having been sent on ahead to announce our want of horses. Villagers uncover their heads—much reverential bowing—flag carried at the fore—great admiration.”

At one village no man could be found to drive. “A woman volunteers—catastrophe. Lovely moonlight night. We fly along, and drive through magnificent woods. Trees an immense height for their slender base. Tremendously high banks to the river. Lovely drive through forest—intensity of cold—comfort of sleeping-bag.” At last the 800 miles were accomplished, and the horses galloped into Yeneseisk.

This important Siberian town contained a population, at the time of Captain Wiggins’ first visit, of over 11,000 inhabitants, many of whom were wealthy merchants and owners of gold-mines. The fine appearance of the town impressed the Captain. Amongst its many well-built houses were several large churches, with gilded domes and cupolas, in the Byzantine style of architecture. A considerable trade was carried on in wheat, barley, oats, tallow, hides, tea from China, and in a variety of other produce. The gold mines of the district are rich and extensive, and there are also copper and iron mines. The population consisted of

[See face p. 120.]

YENISEISK





Russians, Germans, Poles, Tartars, Jews, and one Englishman or Anglo-German, a Mr Boiling, the only shipbuilder on the river.

During his brief stay in the town the Captain was lionised. He was warmly received by the Governor-General of Siberia and other officials, and several parties and soirees were given in his honour.

Writing to his wife on December 4, he says : "Everybody here is very kind, and glad that we got our ship up as far as Kureika—some 900 miles from the entrance to the Yenesei. By doing this we have saved the character of the river. Had we not succeeded, it would have been set down that the river was too shallow for navigation, and unfit for carrying on commerce. Certainly we had much labour, and every one wonders how we got up. I must close this, for the post goes out this morning, and I am very busy calling upon all the 'great guns,' from the Governor down to the well-to-do merchant."

In a few days he left Yeneseisk for Krasnoiarsk, another large town on the river, between 200 and 300 miles from Yeneseisk. Here, he says, he met with a hearty reception from the Governor, "who rendered me all the aid in his power, furnishing me with a Government pass for engaging horses on the road to St. Petersburg. This pass constituted me a courier, who took precedence of everything on the road, even the mail, and consequently I was forwarded with the utmost despatch, travelling day

and night, only stopping for a single night at such towns as Omsk, Tomsk, and Tiumen."

The Captain kept no detailed journal of his overland journey of some 4,000 miles to St. Petersburg, but made various allusions to it in his letters, lectures, and articles for the Press. Some of his brief comments in the *Geographical Magazine* may be quoted.

"At Omsk the Governor-General of Western Siberia received me in the most hospitable manner, entertaining me to dinner, and giving me the most valuable information concerning the Obi and its estuary, and the mode of transit of the immense commerce of that district. He authenticated in every way the reports of the richness and wealth of the country, and expressed the most earnest desire that I would not allow my energies to flag in the endeavour to open out such magnificent rivers as the Obi and the Yenesei.

"Pushing forward, I reached Tiumen, the principal city for shipping on the Obi. Here I found the spirit of progress in full operation. On the river were to be observed steamers of the largest dimensions, being nearly 300 feet in length and of 300 horse-power, built and finished in a good style with modern engines, constructed principally by the English firm of Wardropper Brothers. I also observed splendid lighters of between 200 and 300 feet in length, and capable of carrying 500 or 600 tons of cargo, at the same time not drawing more than three feet of water.

"Proceeding night and day *via* the Ekaterinburg Pass of the Ural Mountains, ascending the eastern slopes on the last day of the old year, and descending the western side on the morning of the new year—thus leaving the Urals and the old year behind together—I soon found myself at Nishni-Novgorod where I left my sledge, and took train to St. Petersburg. At Moscow I was well received by the President (Count Camarovski), the Vice-President (M. Trapeznikoff), and the Secretary (M. Waldemar), of the Imperial Society for Marine Communications. These gentlemen also gave me much valuable information."

Immediately after the Captain's arrival at St. Petersburg he wrote to his wife. From this letter — undated, but probably written on January 10 or 11, 1877—we may quote a few sentences.

"I arrived yesterday all well, after a seriously hard sledge-journey of over 4,000 miles to Nishni-Novgorod, where we took train for St. Petersburg. I have not time to tell you all our adventures, trials, difficulties, and dangers. They must wait for some future opportunity—when, I can hardly tell at present, for I do not know yet whether circumstances will permit of my coming home, greatly as one may wish it. Suffice it to say at present that, throughout all the above-named trials, amidst the severe frosts and snow of a Siberian winter journey of two months, the 'tee-totaler' never suffered in the slightest degree, but, on the contrary, was fresher at the end of the

journey than at the beginning. In fact, he became so inured to frozen beard, and terrific jolting and knocking in a sledge, that he could have gone on, he believes, for ever.

“The reverse was the case with his Russian companion, a very strong man, thoroughly inured to his own climate, and a very temperate drinker. He was on two occasions *hors de combat*, with frightful rheumatism in the head and body, and is now very shaky, whereas, we are glad to inform our Temperance chums, that we have not as much as a single pain in our body.

“As to the effects upon my crew, I can answer for them only up to the time of leaving them, when they were all well. For some time past they had been doing hard duty amidst intense frost and heavy falls of snow.

“Markham says that the bacon froze on his journey. With us, when sledging, the spirits taken by my companion froze, and even forced their way through the glass bottles, and became hoar-frost on the outside.

“So now, you see, we had some cold in Siberia —charming Siberia, so far as the country is concerned. In spite of the fact that I have undertaken a severe task, I would not have missed it for anything, even though I have little hope of doing any business here. . . . The Society for Naval Communications has asked me to read a paper on Tuesday next, Russian New Year’s Day. . . . Certainly, the disturbed state of the political

atmosphere has a bad influence here upon commerce of all kinds, especially upon new speculations. . . .

"I must now close this hasty scrawl, for I have to write several letters, and to prepare my paper. Tell Arthur that Uncle Joe managed to cut through the ice without the help of the kitchen chopper, but he must be sure not to allow me to sail on another Arctic voyage minus such an important instrument."

The paper which the Captain prepared, and was read for him in a Russian translation before the Imperial Society for Naval Communications, on January 16, consisted of a report of his voyage in the *Thames*. It was, practically, his Journal, summarised, polished, and adapted for his select audience. The long extracts from the Journal already given in these pages render the reproduction of the paper unnecessary.

The meeting received the Captain with enthusiasm, and heartily thanked him for his report. In the course of the remarks made by members at the close of the address, hints were thrown out that if the great Siberian rivers were to be thoroughly surveyed, the work should be done by Russians. The Captain, in a letter to his wife, says: "Fortunately, I urged them, in returning thanks, to set to work with their own countrymen, as there was room for all." He adds: "The Naval men are evidently jealous in the extreme, because their Government will not allow them to go to work."

The Society elected the Captain a Life Member, and presented him with a chart of the locality of his explorations, handsomely bound in morocco. A letter of thanks, for his efforts to open up the rivers, was also presented.

He constantly strove, throughout his Siberian work, to emphasize his main object, rather than his own personal exertions. "I care not who does it, so long as it is done," he often said, with regard to opening up the rivers to commerce. He was willing to do all in his power to help on the great project, whether the funds for the purpose were provided by England or by Russia. This generous attitude is illustrated in his address of thanks to the above Society, which is given below, and was—he notes on the manuscript copy—"written in pencil during the meeting for the translator to turn into Russian."

*"To the President and Members of the  
Imperial Society for Naval Communications.*

"GENTLEMEN,—I have to thank you for the honour you have conferred in granting me an opportunity of reading a descriptive report of my last voyage to the Kara Sea, the rivers Obi and Yenesei, and also to thank you for the handsome gift just presented to me.

"The chart will serve to remind one always of the fact that your countrymen worked on these seas and rivers long before I commenced, and the Life-Membership will serve to incite me to further

efforts in working for the noble cause which such a Society as yours represents, providing that I can but meet with the necessary support.

“I began my work with but one view—the benefit of mankind; for the field is so extensive that, should commerce flourish, nearly the whole of mankind will be affected.

“Permit me to congratulate you upon the noble efforts of your countrymen this last summer to explore and navigate the Yenesei and the Obi, and the Kara Sea, by building two schooners, and despatching them to the entrances of the rivers. Whilst admiring such enterprises, allow me, in the most friendly manner, to warn you and them against any hasty or ill-formed plans for overcoming the difficulties connected with the navigation of the Kara Sea. It can only be done by your having, or building, the best and strongest of ships for such work. With such vessels, no explorers could be more sanguine of success than your own countrymen, inured as they are to the hardships and the cold of your Siberian climate.

“Above all, let me recommend all expeditions, whether of Russian or of foreign origin, to work in conjunction with, rather than in opposition to, one another. Had I known that a schooner was attempting to descend the Gulf of Obi, I should have continued on at all risks. Then, with regard to the Bremen expedition across the Isthmus of Yalmal: the native guides actually saw my ship at anchor at the head of the Baidarata Gulf;

and had I known the expedition was there, I could have taken the party on board, and returned with them to Europe, or have gone on to the Obi or the Yenesei, as might have been determined. Again, had I known that M. Sidoroff's schooner had been built with the intention of taking her to sea, and that she would call, and perhaps have to pass the winter, at Brekhoffska Island, I should have proceeded to that spot, and, finding her there, could have taken her cargo, or, in company with her, returned to Europe. Not having any definite information respecting such arrangements, I missed seeing her, and proceeded on, up the river.

"In conclusion, I again thank you, gentlemen, for the high honour you have conferred upon me this evening."<sup>1</sup>

A few days later, at a meeting of the Imperial Society for the Encouragement of Commerce,

<sup>1</sup> The allusions made by the Captain to other expeditions need a word of explanation. In the summer of 1876 a Russian schooner was sent down the Obi, with the object of reaching the sea and surveying the locality of the Obi Gulf. She was manned by river sailors, who were quite unable to manage her when she entered the sea. After being driven upon sandbanks, she was taken back to Obdorsk in a damaged condition. The Bremen expedition had a scientific object in view. It proceeded to Siberia overland, and after penetrating the Yamal Peninsula, returned home by the overland route. M. Sidoroff's schooner, commanded by Captain Schwanenberg, was the vessel containing a cargo of graphite which Captain Wiggins expected to meet in the estuary of the Yenesei.

In the summer of 1876 no less than ten expeditions—without counting the voyage of the *Thames*—set out to these seas and rivers of the north. Two of them were scientific, one sporting, and the rest had a commercial object in view, but they all originated undoubtedly from the interest excited by the voyages of Captain Wiggins in 1874 and 1875.

another paper by the Captain was read. In this address he confined himself chiefly to the question of the future navigation of the Obi, how best to accomplish it, and thus open a new route for commerce with Europe. He strongly advocated the utilisation of the isthmus between the Muddy Gulf and the Obi River—a distance of only about sixty miles—for the transit of goods to and from Europe, and urged that a thorough survey, by competent land and marine surveyors, should be carried out, for the purpose of deciding in what way the transit could be effected easily and quickly. He thought that, possibly, the two rivers on the isthmus might be connected by a canal, or goods could be carried overland across the entire sixty miles.

He gave four reasons for preferring the route by the isthmus to going round by White Island and the Obi Gulf: "First, that, providing a good road for transit could be found, a distance of 2,000 versts would be saved. Second, that the probably difficult and shallow navigation of the long Gulf of the Obi would be avoided in favour of the Baidarata (or Muddy) Gulf, which is clear of shoals and exceedingly safe and easy to navigate. Third, that time, which means money, would be saved, not only because of the route being shorter, but because, according to my experience, vessels can enter the Baidarata Gulf a month sooner, on an average, than they could reach the Obi at White Island. Fourth,

that a greater danger than navigating the long Gulf of the Obi and the shallow estuaries of the river would be avoided, namely, the serious difficulty of forcing a passage at times through the ice, the risks of which to life and property are, when compared with those of sea and river, as a hundred to one."

The Captain assured his audience that, although he gave such prominence to the Isthmus route, he felt convinced that the Gulf of the Obi could be navigated. "I believe that, with such a steamer as I was requested to obtain and take command of last year, there would be no difficulty in ascending the Obi, even as far as Tiumen; and I earnestly trust that not only the isthmus may be surveyed, but your Societies may see the need of despatching this summer a vessel similar to that which they commissioned me to purchase in England. Whether under the command of your own countrymen or not, be sure, gentlemen, of one thing, that I wish the expedition every success, and would willingly, if required, give it every aid in my power."

He said, in conclusion, "Having now demonstrated that a large ocean-going steamer can ascend the Yenesei, I am still ready in the future to combine with, or to aid, any expedition, in attempting to demonstrate the same question with regard to the Obi, for it was to this river I devoted my first efforts, and, although foiled in my three attempts, owing to the want of

proper means, I still hope that by receiving support from some quarter or other, I may be yet able to prove that the task I set myself in 1874, and which had been revolving in my mind for many years, is a proper and right one, well founded in theory, and worthy of practical demonstration. Had I been acquainted, previous to last season, with such gentlemen as your enterprising citizen, M. Sidoroff, and your generous Alexander Sibiriakoff—the only man in Russia who has practically assisted me—doubtless, with the advice of the one and the pecuniary aid of the other, I could have succeeded in settling the question of the Obi in 1875. As it is, it remains to be done, and I trust will be accomplished next season by some expedition succeeding in ascending or descending the Gulf of the Obi, and also settling the question of a route *via* the isthmus.”

The members of the Society of Commerce were profuse in their thanks for the Captain’s valuable paper, and for his services in the cause of commerce, and they elected him one of their Life Members. “Thanks and Life-Memberships are all very well,” wrote the Captain to his wife, —“but it is not business.”

His object in coming to St. Petersburg was to do business—to persuade the leading merchants to form a company, in order that his cherished scheme might be advanced; but by the end of nearly a fortnight he had not received the smallest encouragement in that direction. “Had they any

steam in them," he wrote to his wife, "I ought to be sent home to purchase a boat, and take her out, with a cargo, to meet the *Thames* at the mouth of the Yenesei, proceed home with her, and let the new steamer be taken up the river. But this means money, and to start a company in earnest and quickly—well, this the Russians are the last people in the world to do."

Having got nothing but "thanks and Life-Memberships" from the merchants, the Captain turned to the Government itself, but with no better result. He had "an interesting interview with the Secretary of State," who distinctly informed him that no privileges would be granted to any company, Russian or foreign.

The Captain's position at this juncture was not by any means an enviable one. It is true that his third voyage was, so far, a notable success; he had accomplished much by his observations and surveying, and his yacht, the *Thames*, was the first ocean steamer that ever ascended the Yenesei; but financially these three voyages had stranded him. He had spent all his savings to advance the great scheme, to which, two or three years previously, he had resolved "to devote the remainder of his life." Writing to M. Sibiriakoff, he says: "Yes, sir—I have risked every kopek I have in the world over it."

The cost of his journey from Yeneseisk to St. Petersburg had been defrayed, to the extent of 1,000 roubles, by this same generous supporter,

who, unfortunately, was now in Vienna. The Captain had been advised and encouraged to undertake the journey, the prospect being held out that the merchants would co-operate to further his scheme. And they had done nothing.

He was in pecuniary straits—more formidable to his dauntless spirit than ice-laden straits of Arctic seas and rivers. He had no means either for meeting the cost of his return journey to the Yenesei, for paying the expenses of his ship wintering in the river, or even for running home to Sunderland. “Give my dearest love to all ; it will be indeed hard not to come home after getting so close—to be so near and yet so far—but the stern realities of duty must be obeyed first.” Thus he wrote when he saw no prospect of getting to England.

But the “wind” of adversity was “tempered” in some degree. His devoted friend, Mr Charles L. W. Gardiner, came to the rescue, and offered to pay his expenses to England and back to St. Petersburg, whilst the same gentleman—one of his staunchest friends to the close of his life—promised to bear £300 of the expense incurred by his ship wintering in the Yenesei.

He reached London on January 31, 1877, and in a few days went home to Sunderland.

## CHAPTER VII

### ICE-BATTLE ON THE YENESEI

Flying visit to England—From Charing Cross to the Yenesei with Mr H. Seeböhm—Buying the *Ibis*—Sledging up the river to Kureika—Ascent and descent of river banks—Kamin Pass—Sagacity of sledge-dogs—“Keeping shop” at Turukhansk—A grasping Governor—Greeting from the crew of the *Thames*—Cutting out the ship from the ice—Break-up of the ice—Niagara outrivalled—Advent of summer—Starting for Dudinka—On a shoal—A question of “two minutes”—Abandonment of the *Thames*—Testing the crew’s pluck—Seeböhm on “a thorough Englishman”—The “offence” of sailing a teetotal ship—Relations between Captain and crew—To Golchika in the *Ibis*—An appeal to British patriotism fails—Sale of the *Ibis*—Seeböhm’s criticisms.

ONE of the most important of the Captain’s engagements during his flying visit to England was the preparation of an article on his voyages for the *Magazine* of the Royal Geographical Society. He had been invited to read a paper before the Society, but as the date mentioned would compel him to defer his departure for Siberia, he reluctantly declined the honour. Mr (afterwards Sir) Clements R. Markham urged him, as an alternative, to write

a report of his voyages, and, accepting this suggestion, he applied himself to his task. The article, containing a skilfully condensed account of his three voyages, presenting all their salient features, duly appeared in the issue of the *Geographical Magazine* for March 1877, on the last day of the Captain's sojourn in England.

The main object of his visit, however, remained unaccomplished. To quote his own words, he desired "to get some people, with faith enough, to try to open up trade with the Yenesei. But I found that no one would listen to my calculation as to the trade that might be done there."

He had no expectation of having a companion on his long journey until within a few days of his departure. On February 23, Mr H. Seebohm, the well-known ornithologist, made his acquaintance, and, wishing to pursue ornithological and ethnological researches in East Siberia, thought that the opportunity of travelling with a gentleman who had already made the journey, and consequently "knew the ropes," might never occur again. It was the Captain's intention to start from London in three days, but he finally arranged to allow the naturalist five days to make the necessary preparations for accompanying him.

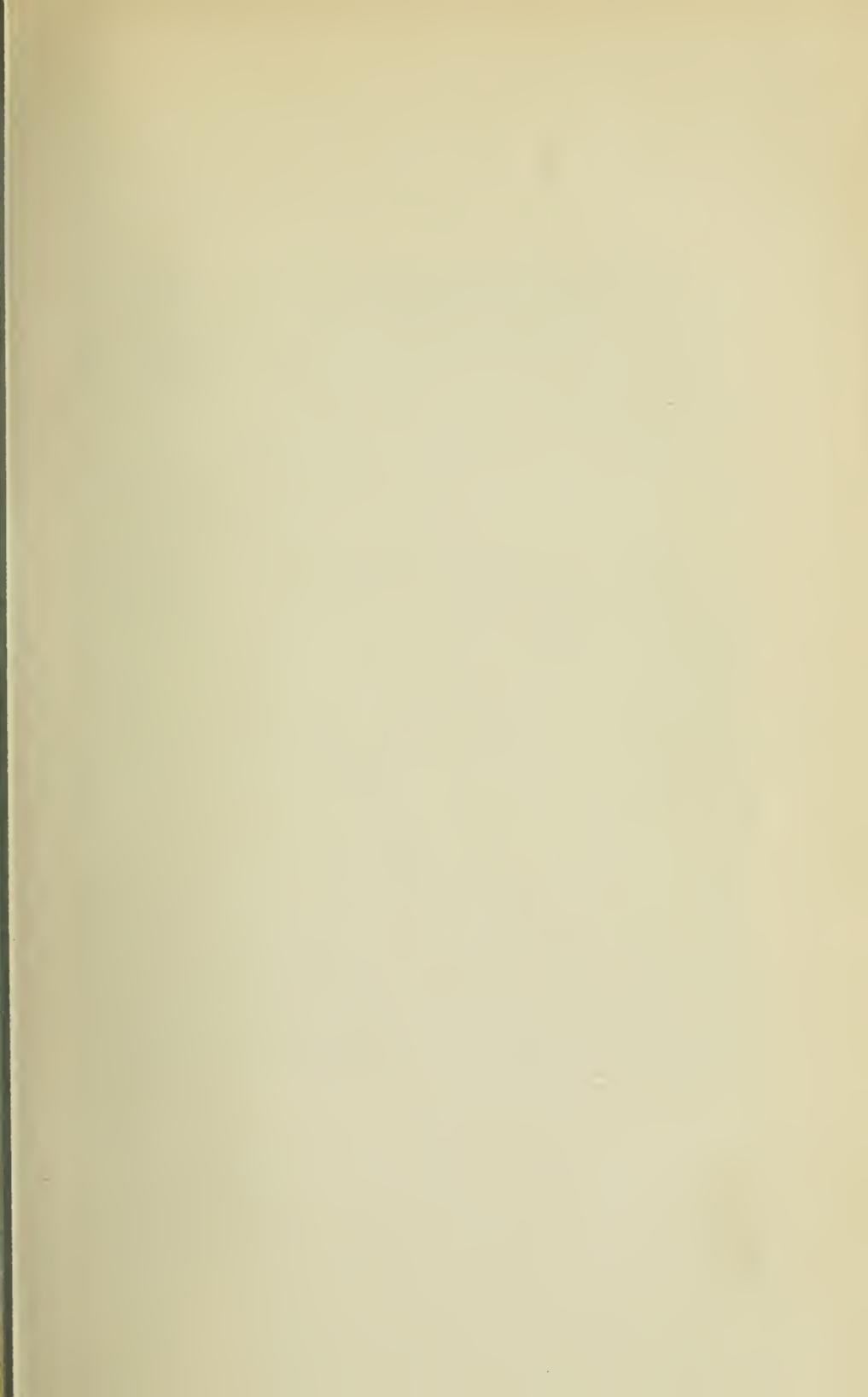
Leaving Charing Cross on March 1, Captain Wiggins and Mr Seebohm went direct to St. Petersburg, where they stayed three days. The Captain had interviews with some of the members

of the Russian Government, also with Sidoroff and other merchants, and again sought to excite practical interest and co-operation respecting his Siberian projects.

The travellers proceeded to Moscow, and then to Nishni Novgorod, where the sledge journey of more than 3,000 miles began. The thaw had set in, and consequently the roads were bad. "Given bad roads, with wild weather," said the Captain once, "sledding is awful." Mr Seebohm forcibly described his experience as the equivalent of "being inside a well-battered tin kettle tied to an affrighted dog's tail." Nevertheless, there were compensations. The ornithologist found his, from noting the varieties of birds met with here and there, whilst the explorer improved his acquaintance with Siberian shipbuilding operations at Kongur and Tiumen, and was gratified with the interest shown in his work by merchants and Governors. For details of the journey to Yeneseisk, the reader is referred to Mr Seebohm's entertaining account in his book "*Siberia in Asia*."<sup>1</sup>

From a letter written by the Captain at Tiumen, and addressed to a Sunderland journal, it is evident that the mariner's expectations and hopes were once more on the up-grade. Referring to the excitement in Russia and Siberia about the ocean-route, he says: "At Moscow, the Imperial

<sup>1</sup> Mr Seebohm's "*Siberia in Europe*," and his "*Siberia in Asia*," were reprinted and issued as one volume, with the title of "*The Birds of Siberia*," in 1901.



[To face p. 137.

MONASTERY AT EKATERINBURG.



Society for Commerce is fitting out a steam expedition, to sail from England with cargo this summer. The merchants at Tiumen have decided to equip a well-built schooner, with a cargo of grain, hides, tallow, etc., to join the *Thames* at the Gulf of Obi. If this proves feasible, we shall come home together. The merchants offer a reward to my crew of 1,000 roubles, should we be successful in escorting the schooner to Europe. Steamers are to proceed down the Obi Gulf, as far as possible, in the summer, in order to meet my vessel and the Russian expedition. On the Yenesei the excitement is also as great, for I have already received offers from merchants enough to load my small steamer three or four times over.

"I have just had a letter from my ice-master at Kureika, informing me that the crew were all well at the time of his writing (December 23). My companion, Mr Seebohm, of Sheffield, is charmed with everything he sees, and wonderstruck at all the facilities for commerce, and especially at the abundance of natural wealth to be found here. What he will think by the time he reaches the gold-fields, etc., of the Yenesei, I cannot imagine. Suffice it to say that, up to the present, he agrees with me that it is a crying shame that commerce is not flourishing between England and these parts."

The travellers reached the town of Yeneseisk on April 5. Eight or nine hundred miles of ice and snow lay between them and the winter quarters

of the *Thames*. Wiggins introduced his companion to the grandees of the town, and both the Englishmen filled up their three days' rest with business and attending receptions. Mr Boiling, who has been referred to in a previous chapter, had a small schooner on the stocks, which Mr Seeböhm decided to buy, Boiling undertaking to deliver her at Kureika, when the ice broke up. Wiggins was to be part owner, his share of expense being the rigging of the ship, which he engaged to attend to at Kureika. The schooner, to be named the *Ibis*, was to carry Seeböhm and Boiling for 1000 miles down the Yenesei to Dudinka—to enable the former to pursue his ornithological observations—whilst Wiggins went up the Kureika with the *Thames* for a cargo of graphite. It was left an open question whether the *Ibis* should be sold at Dudinka, or accompany the *Thames* across the Kara Sea homewards. It is necessary to give these details in order that the sequence of events may be understood.

The Captain and his companion left the town hurriedly on April 9. For some days before reaching Yeneseisk they had been trying to outstrip the south wind, which was following them too closely for their comfort. A wind prevailing from that quarter meant the breaking up of the roads, and probably many weeks' delay. However, on reaching Yeneseisk they found a hard frost, and were anticipating at least a week's rest. On the morning of April 9 the dreaded south wind swept into the

town, the snow began to melt, and the travellers quickly packed their sledges and set off.

In one sledge rode the Captain and Mr Seebohm, and in the other Mr Seebohm's servant, who had been engaged in the town for the purpose of skinning birds.

The first part of the journey lay along the banks of the river, often through dense forests, where the track, of the roughest description, caused several upsets. It was a relief when this road was exchanged for the river itself, for here the surface was perfectly smooth, making sledging a delight. But at every post-station, placed above the banks, the sledges had to toil up the steep ascent, a difficult task even with the help of the villagers. The descent was undertaken with several villagers holding on to the sides of the sledge, to act as brakes. As the pace increased, one or two of the helpers usually rolled over into the snow; but the travellers always reached the river again safe and sound.

On approaching the majestic Kamin Pass, a strong and bitterly cold wind drove the snow in dense sheets, so that little of the scenery was visible. "When I sledged through the Pass in December," writes the Captain, "it was on a day of brilliant sunshine. The huge piles of ice sparkled like blocks of diamonds, and the frozen waterfalls, hanging over the faces of the rocks, were like fretted crystal veils." During the first portion of the journey, horses drew the sledges. At Turukhansk the horses were replaced by dogs—"splendid animals, strong,

willing, and sagacious, pulling steadily, and never shirking work." Several empty sledges, drawn by dogs, were passed on the journey. Having taken travellers to their destinations, or to post-houses, the dogs had been dismissed, and were making their way home without drivers.

On arriving at Turukhansk, the Captain sold some of the sample goods, which he had left there on his previous visit. He "kept open shop for a couple of days," says Mr Seebohm, who gives an account of the proceedings, together with a graphic description of von Gazenkampf, the grasping, shifty old Governor, or Zessedatel, and his crafty ways of doing business.

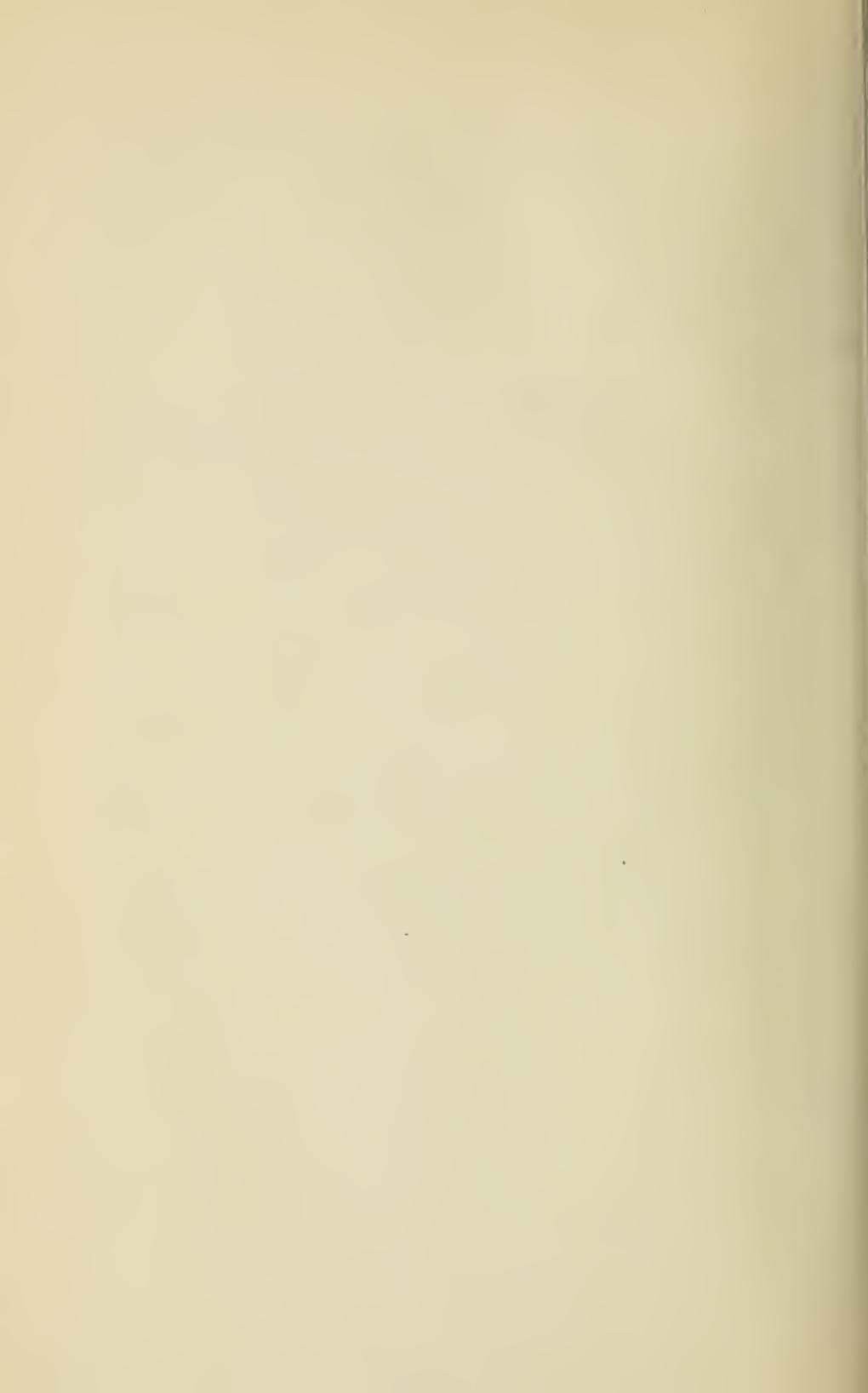
On the last portion of the journey, reindeer took the places of the dogs, and the pace was vastly increased. "Sometimes," writes Mr Seebohm, "the animals seemed to fly over the snow." The party reached Kureika on April 23, and received a hearty welcome from the crew of the *Thames*. Again quoting the ornithologist, for details not supplied by the Captain—"We had sledged from Nishni Novgorod to the Kureika, a distance of 4,860 versts, or 3,240 English miles. Including stoppages, we had been forty-six days on the road, during which we had made use of about a thousand horses, eighteen dogs, and forty reindeer. The total number of stages was 229."

The crew of the *Thames* were all well, most of them "looking fatter" than when the Captain left them. Plenty of lime-juice and dried vegetables,



DOG-SLEDGE CARAVAN ON A SIBERIAN RIVER.

[*To face p. 140.*



with daily exercise, had preserved their health. The crew of the *Aurora Borealis*, who had wintered some two hundred miles further north on the Yenesei, had fared very differently. They had not been provided with lime-juice, and consequently three of them perished from scurvy.

The quarters of the *Thames* were situated a short distance up the river Kureika, one of the tributaries of the Yenesei. She was close to the north bank, about a hundred feet high. The task of releasing her from the grip of the ice can be told in the Captain's own words.

"The ship was frozen to the ground; but the crew had succeeded in cutting her out of the ice about half way. We now began in earnest, as the water was rising fast, and we feared lest the ship, being so firmly frozen to the mud bottom, might be dragged under water. I hired all the labourers to be found in the neighbourhood, and we attacked the ice with all our pickaxes and all that we could borrow. This part of the work was soon accomplished, but we found a tougher job awaiting us, in the shape of mud frozen to a rock, forming a sort of cradle, in which the ship lay up to about eight feet.

"And now such a hammer-and-tongs task began as was surely never tackled by desperate men before. The crew worked well, but not until a fortnight had passed did we succeed—working day and night—in getting about two-thirds of the ship cut out. Then the water from the over-

flowing river broke in upon us, and we had to give up the task. I cannot recount in the brief space of a letter all our difficulties, but will give just an outline of them. Early one morning the ship suddenly broke away from the ice, and floated, with the water nearly to her loaded marks; but the breaking away was followed by a terrific rebound, which made one fear that the keel must be smashed. She proved strong enough for the strain, however, and nothing seemed to be injured.

"The real test of her qualities for strength soon occurred. On June 1 the ice in the Yenesei broke up, and with a tremendous smashing it rushed to the place where the *Thames* was lying, and its force seemed enough to tear away the very ground from under her. Away she went like a feather with the ice; and worse was in store for her. She was screwed and literally torn along the beach, from stone to stone, from rock to rock. At last, after taking the ship about a mile up the river, the rush of ice stopped, and away went the water, falling some ten feet, as suddenly as it rose, leaving the *Thames* high and dry, cradled in and on the top of a pack of ice—her rudder smashed to pieces and her stern-post damaged. It was a wonder the injury was not more serious—in fact, that her timbers were not torn away.

"In about twelve hours up came the water again, bearing with it vast quantities of ice, and away went the poor craft, forced along the rough,

rocky beach, tossed about like a football from ice to flood, and from flood to ice. This second ordeal caused her to leak somewhat, but still she stood it out bravely, driving backwards and forwards, crushed and jammed by huge blocks of ice. She suffered similar attacks until, on June 3, we had open water. On getting up steam we found, to our infinite satisfaction, that the propeller was all right. We soon managed, with the propeller and with the aid of ropes, to get her into the creek, near which she lay all the winter. It has taken us from that time (June 8) to this (June 22) to make a new rudder, and to get it to fit. Oh, what a job! The poor carpenter and self working till 11 P.M. I had to fell the trees for it. To-day we succeeded in getting it to work. Then we took the ship out of the creek, for the water is now falling so fast that the ship would have been aground in a day or two, not floating again until next summer. We are now moored at anchor abreast of the house, and shall take stores on board to-morrow, samples of tallow in casks, and graphite for ballast, and then off to Dudinka."

Mr Seeböhm calculated that at least 50,000 acres of ice had passed the ship. "On several occasions we stood on the banks of the river for hours, transfixed with astonishment, staring aghast at icebergs, twenty to thirty feet high, driven down the river at a speed of from ten to twenty miles an hour. Such a display of

irresistible power dwarfs Niagara into comparative insignificance."

"I now have to tell you," writes Wiggins, "that our expedition has been enlarged by the arrival yesterday, from Yeneseisk, of a staunch, sturdy little craft, named by Mr Seeböhm the *Ibis*, about one-third larger than the *Whim*. So you see that, should anything happen to the poor *Thames*, we shall have 'another string to our bow.'"

The three weeks' ice-battle had come to an end. The south wind had conquered; the winter was over; summer appeared, and, as if by magic, the fields were decked with flowers. Quoting Mr Seeböhm, "Winter was finally vanquished for the year, and the fragments of his beaten army were compelled to retreat to the triumphant music of thousands of song-birds, and amidst the waving of green leaves and the illumination of gay flowers of every hue."

During his stay on the Kureika the enthusiastic naturalist, as the result of excursions in the neighbourhood, bagged about a hundred specimens of the birds of Siberia.

On June 30 the *Thames* left Kureika, sailing down the Yenesei for Dudinka, with Mr Boiling, of Yeneseisk, acting as pilot. Unhappily, her career was soon to come to an end. On the following day she was crossing the river when an unexpected current carried her on to a sandbank, close to a small island. She was quickly lightened

—her stores being transferred to the *Ibis*, and the ballast thrown overboard. An anchor was carried off in a boat, and the cable hauled in; but the anchor could find no hold, the bottom of the river being apparently smooth ice. This effort was repeated again and again, but it failed to move the ship. At last an anchor was dropped at a great distance, and, to the intense joy of all on board, held fast. As the cable was hauled in, the ship was gradually drawn off the sandbank into deep water.

The next day the ship was re-ballasted, and on July 3, she once more set off, with a strong wind ahead. But she worked badly, and answered her starboard helm slowly. Something was wrong with her keel. About midday she got on to a shoal, and was got off with great difficulty. Just as she was reaching a safe position, the wind suddenly changed to the north, and, before the sails could be furled, the ship was driven again into shallow water. It was a question of only "two minutes," says Mr Seebohm. If the north wind had held off for two minutes, the ship would have been in perfect safety in deep water. The crew worked hard through the night in attempting to release her, but all their efforts proved useless. The Captain came to the conclusion that the ship must be abandoned.

We may be sure that he did not arrive at this decision until the smallest hope of saving the vessel had fled. He believed that she would

remain in her present position until the following summer, and then be carried away by the ice and probably destroyed. Although her loss could not be attributed to any fault or lack of skill on his part, yet he felt that such a disaster would probably prove of serious detriment to Siberian projects. Merchants, speculators, and underwriters, facing the hard facts of the difficulties, problems, and perils of navigation, and of the short and variable summer seasons, might draw the inference that "the game was not worth the candle," and withdraw their support from a scheme which, for these reasons, seemed to them impracticable.

"We were beached beyond recovery, wrecked on our homeward track, the prospects of the voyage destroyed, and our labours and endurance were all in vain. It was a severe blow, after escaping from the ice, to find our expedition brought to such an inglorious end. We had overcome difficulties of no ordinary character, fighting against climate while navigating an unsurveyed river, whose mighty waters rolled impetuously to the sea, digging for itself fresh channels, and in its course building up islands of sand, making the navigation extremely difficult and dangerous to the inexperienced."

But the Captain's religious faith kept him calm. Disaster had baulked his carefully-laid plans, but drawing strength and hope from his creed, he felt and said, "All is for the best." In that strain he wrote to his wife: "All is ordered well. There

is a good reason for this disappointment, otherwise I believe I should go out of my mind. It may be that there is other and better work in store for me, although it may prove a harder task than the present one."

When all hope of saving the ship was gone, the Captain set to work to finish the rigging of the *Ibis*, and to re-transfer the stores and baggage from the *Thames* to her. Then a "council of war" was held, which Mr Seebohm joined. The Captain told his men that he could say nothing at present as to how they were to get home—whether overland or by sea. Perhaps a passage could be secured in a Government steamer, or a merchant steamer from Golchika, or they might return in the *Ibis*. The last suggestion provoked very evident signs of disapproval. Then he put the matter plainly to them—"If necessity or duty required," would they go home with him in the *Ibis*, or as far as the Obi? Beginning with the mate, they one and all flatly refused. He appealed to their patriotism, to their honour and pluck as British sailors; but all his arguments were useless.

Mr Seebohm declined to commit himself, but expressed a strong wish to go as far as Golchika, and proposed that the future destination of the *Ibis* should not be finally settled until reaching that port. He says that he considered the suggestion to proceed to Europe in this ship "foolhardy"; but then he was not a seaman, and had not been on Arctic waters in the *Whim*, which was smaller than

the *Ibis*. The Captain knew what he was about ; he would never have made the proposal had he not felt convinced that the little schooner could be taken safely, in the middle of the summer, across the Kara Sea to Europe. The sequel proved that he was perfectly right.

Seehoehm, in narrating the events immediately following the disaster to the *Thames*, takes occasion to criticise the conduct of both Wiggins and his crew. He alleges that master and men were at loggerheads—that there was almost a mutiny ; and that the master was responsible, to some extent, for this state of things. “He had not sufficient tact,” and was “apt to form rash judgments,” and that, being a “thorough Englishman,” he often blundered, and showed perseverance and ingenuity in extricating himself from the effects of his blunders. The Captain’s failings, in the view of the naturalist, were all crystallised into one—that “he was a teetotaler, and worked his ship on teetotal principles.” This really seems to be the head and front of the Captain’s offence, for Seehoehm goes on to say in the next sentence : “In my opinion, this was the fountain-head of all his difficulties. After four-and-twenty hours’ hard work, a glass of honest grog would, more than anything else in the world, have cheered their drooping spirits, revived their fainting pluck, and cemented the *camaraderie* that ought to subsist between a captain and his men, especially upon expeditions involving such rare difficulties.”

There is little doubt, of course, that if Wiggins

had taken the precaution to serve out a glass of "honest grog"—or two—preliminary to the council of war on July 8, all the men would have been prepared to go with the Captain in the *Ibis* to Europe, or even to the uttermost parts of the earth. But in order to keep their courage to the sticking-place, and support the *camaraderie*, it would have been absolutely necessary to serve out similar doses daily, until the little ship was fairly on the Kara Sea. Whether, under such circumstances, the men would ever have seen home again, is doubtful.

Mr Seehoem may be right in his contention, but the real question was not one of grog or no grog, but simply one of contract between Captain and crew. Before these men signed articles at Sunderland they knew they were joining a teetotal ship, and that, however hard their work might be, no grog would be offered to sustain their fainting energy. Wiggins had sailed teetotal ships for many years, and in many parts of the world; and he was not going to budge from his contract or his principles, even though these men were hard-worked for four-and-twenty hours. He had seen quite enough of the "vodka habit" in Russia and Siberia to strengthen, rather than to cause him to relax, his principles. The people, high and low, from Government officials down to the peasants, with exceptions, were addicted to the habit, with ruinous effects in business, on morals and health.

Even Mr Seehoem is forced to make note at times of the prevailing evil. One instance will

suffice. Speaking of the natives of Kureika, he says: "We left the settlement with gloomy anticipations of the future. Debt and drink continually drain everything of value into the hands of half-a-dozen merchants, who are gradually killing off the geese that lay the golden egg."

Referring again to the relations between the Captain and his men, it is satisfactory to find that Seebohm's sympathies "went rather with the Captain than with his crew: the latter, when he appeared unjust, should have considered how much allowance ought to be made for a man who had seen his pet schemes frustrated and his ship lost." In other places in his book he speaks of the Captain as a "very agreeable travelling companion," as a man of "indomitable pluck," and of "scrupulous honesty in dealing with the natives."

The *Ibis* sailed for Golchika on July 9. She was manned by three of the crew of the *Thames*, the rest of the crew remaining at Igarka, near which village lay the wreck. Nothing particularly worthy of note occurred on the journey. The boat anchored at several places, thus giving Mr Seebohm opportunities to continue his bird and egg collecting. Wiggins noticed at Dudinka a quantity of fine large coal, also some copper ore and alabaster.

At Brekhoffsky, Captain Schwanenberg joined the ship, which had been "behaving remarkably well." He reported the loss of the *Aurora Borealis*—wrecked at the break-up of the ice. He wanted

to buy the *Ibis* and proceed to Europe with her. Wiggins offered to unite with him for a joint "Anglo-Russian" expedition homewards, but this offer was promptly declined.

The ship anchored off Golchika on July 19. This little village, near the mouth of the Yenesei, and the most northerly settlement on the river, was all alive with its summer industry of catching, curing, storing, and selling fish. Two or three steamers and several barges were waiting for cargoes of fish, to be conveyed up the river. There was no steamer hailing from Europe, but a ship was expected from Bremen in a month or two.

Wiggins had not given up the idea of taking the *Ibis* to Russia or England. Co-operation with Schwanenberg had been refused, and now his only chance left lay in the possibility of persuading the three members of the crew of the *Thames*, who had manned the *Ibis* to Golchika, to change their minds, and accompany him in the little flat-bottomed schooner. He wrote them a letter, appealing to their courage and patriotism, and pointing out the probability, in the event of their refusal, of Russians sailing the ship to Europe. Would they permit Russian seamen to put boasted British pluck to shame? He gave the men twenty-four hours to decide. The appeal was useless—they would not sail in the *Ibis*.

Schwanenberg secured the boat, after all, for his employer, Sidoroff. Seebohm was willing to sell his share for 600 roubles in a bill upon

Sidoroff, and Wiggins agreed to take 400 roubles in cash, and 300 more in a bill upon Sidoroff. It may as well be stated here that the naturalist never got his money, and that Wiggins' bill was not paid until he had sued Sidoroff in the St. Petersburg courts in 1878. From that date the merchant disappears from this story.

Seebohm returned to Yeneseisk in one of the river steamers, and then travelled home by the overland route. In his account of the journey down the Yenesei he expresses disappointment with his visit to Golchika, because he had reached the village so late in the season, and had failed to obtain the eggs of certain rare birds. He appears to blame Captain Wiggins—but without sufficient ground—for the lateness of his arrival. The Captain cannot be saddled with the blame with any degree of justice. He could not reach Golchika earlier owing to the delay at Kureika, which arose partly from the unusual lateness of the summer, and partly from the difficulty of freeing the *Thames* from the ice, and the accident which happened afterwards. For this delay the Captain was in no way responsible.

With regard to other matters, Mr Seebohm appears to have fallen into an unfortunate way of applying the word “blunder,” not only to accidents, but also to any arrangements or proceedings which failed to secure his approval. Captain Wiggins, from the beginning to the end of his association with the naturalist, did all in

his power—in more ways than can be mentioned here—to contribute to the success of Mr Seebohm's expedition, and it seems a little ungracious for the distinguished naturalist to attempt to find fault with the Captain because his collection lacked a few rare specimens. Although his ambition was not realised to its fullest extent, through his failure to obtain eggs either of the knot, the sanderling, or the curlew sandpiper, yet he returned home with about fifteen hundred skins and eggs, thus increasing his fame as one of the foremost ornithologists of England. But naturalists are never satisfied !

## CHAPTER VIII

### UP AND DOWN THE YENESEI

The exploit of the *Ibis*—A paradise of ferns—Fruit and flowers of Siberian forests—Scenes on the river-banks—The Scoptsi sect—A fine ground for yachtsmen—Low prices of live stock—An official shark—Scheme for surveying the peninsulas—Sale of the *Thames* at Yeneseisk—Devotion of the Captain's crews—Down the river again—Archbishop of Krasnoiarsk—On a shoal—Thanksgiving service—A Tongousk canoe—Hunting a squirrel—Daily diet—Entrancing scenery—Native gratitude—“Jolly priests”—The vodka curse—A breechloader's doings—Attack on a woman—Religious abasement—Happy sledge-dogs—Vegetation in springtime—An Ostjak family—The old cooper-hermit—Condition of exiles—Ostjak tea-party—Transference of the *Thames*—Too late for the *Fraser*—High temperature—Back to Yeneseisk—Splendid sturgeon—Migration of swans—An ill-paid doctor—Effects of spirits in a cold climate—Weird rocks—The travels of drift-wood—At Yeneseisk once more—25,000 miles in thirteen months, and no practical results—Pluck and energy undiminished.

“TRANSFERRED the *Ibis* to Captain Schwanenberg and his crew of three men. Hauled down English colours; Captain S—— hoisted Russian.”

It is easy to read between the lines of this brief entry in Wiggins' Journal the keen disappointment and humiliation experienced as the *Ibis* passed from his control. Nevertheless, the ship and her new Captain had his heartiest wishes for a successful venture to Europe. She was re-christened, with much ceremony, the *Dawn*. Before Wiggins took his farewell of her at Brekhoffsky Island, whither she had been towed to ship her crew, he wrote to her Captain the following letter:—

“BREKHOFFSKY, July 26, 1877.

“Captain SCHWANENBERG.

“DEAR SIR,—’n handing over to you the schooner *Ibis*, I beg to say that, although my crew refused to sail in her with me to England, and I am obliged to confess that I part with her with deep regret, yet I wish you every success that I could desire for myself.

“Trusting that you and your crew—now setting such an example of courage—and your owner, Michael Sidoroff, through you, may reap a rich reward, I am, yours truly,

“JOSEPH WIGGINS,

“(late Commander *Ibis*). ”

“P.S.—I sincerely wish that circumstances had permitted my accompanying you, even only as a passenger.”

To finish the story of a notable exploit—the *Dawn* put to sea on August 13; she was

navigated in perfect safety to Stockholm, whence the Russian Government—proud of her achievement—had her convoyed by a man-of-war to St. Petersburg, where she arrived on December 13. Captain Schwanenberg and his crew were welcomed to Russia with great rejoicings.

Wiggins returned to Yeneseisk by a steamer belonging to Soltnikoff, Sidoroff's partner. He had to settle up the affairs of the *Thames*, and send the crew home overland. Being only a passenger on this journey of 1800 miles, he had ample leisure to inspect the scenery on the banks and the villagers at the calling-places. As he proceeded south the air became soft and balmy, but the mosquitoes were as great a plague as they had proved in warmer climes. He noted the dense forests above the high and sloping banks. At one of the wooding-up stations he strolled into a forest, and found a paradise of ferns, growing in luxurious beauty. The male fern reached a height of over five feet, whilst many small varieties formed a verdant carpet all around. Large bushes of currants, raspberries, and blackberries were loaded with fruit. Strawberries were abundant, whilst fine large mushrooms made him long for his stewpan and a good fire. Cranberries were also abundant, and beautiful wild flowers, including familiar friends, such as hearts-ease, forget-me-not, wild-rose, and anemone.

On the banks, here and there, were the chooms of natives, pitched in groups. The children

[*To face p. 156.*

TOWN ON LOWER VENESSEL.





appeared very happy, playing about in scanty attire on the sand, or among the flowers on grassy slopes. Their parents and seniors were busy fishing or boating, whilst the old folks basked in the sunshine. "Quiet, gentle, meek-eyed reindeer" were seen in picturesque groups near fires, which were always kept burning to prevent the mosquitoes from tormenting them. Splendid horses, fifteen hands high, could be bought for £5 each. "Any number of cows were to be seen, but few sheep, although the pastures are very rich." Haymaking was going on at various places, the hay being carried "with grace and ease by light sledges, drawn by pretty horses, driven by prettier maidens." "The hay is composed of rich grass, mixed with large clover, buttercups, sorrel, and many other flowers."

Most of the villages were dirty and miserable. An exception was found at Silovanoff, quite a model village, inhabited by a fanatical sect, called Scopts, who had been exiled from Russia on account of their peculiar practices. They were remarkable for their industry and cleanliness. Their chief occupation was fish-curing, and the Captain was invited to inspect the curing-houses, which he found "beautifully clean, tidy, and cool." He saw, for the first time on the banks of the Yenesei, signs of land-cultivation. In the gardens were beds of turnips, potatoes, and onions, and in the fields excellent crops of the same vegetables. The people numbered only about twenty. They drank nothing

but milk, and a very mild beer. All intoxicants, as well as tea and coffee, were forbidden, and animal food was never touched.

The Kamin Pass, which had so much impressed the Captain in the winter, presented scenery more diversified, with higher lands, finer trees, and more and brighter flowers than other stretches of the river. He thought the scenery quite equal to that of the Hudson river, and in the same style. Island after island, richly wooded, from two to three hundred feet high, came into view, with bold headlands and rocky cliffs, fringed with trees, whilst, on sloping banks, haymakers were at work, their bright-coloured garments adding animation to the scene. Gold-fields abounded in this neighbourhood.

The girdle of islands in this part of the river—eight to ten miles wide—makes the water appear to be an immense and beautiful lake. “What a place for yachting—in and out the labyrinths of these islands, and what lovely spots here and there for gentlemen’s mansions and estates to nestle in! What glorious river excursions could be taken between Irkutsk and Golchika! It is a sad reflection that this magnificent river, which might be a highway for commerce and pleasure, is so neglected. One steams its whole length, and never sees a single sail. The use of sails is not understood here yet, and the two vessels, the *Thames* and the *Ibis*, were the first ever worked on the Yenesei under fore and aft sails.”

“The speed of the river steamers is fairly good,

even though barges, laden with merchandise, have to be taken in tow. The vessels are entirely fired with wood, which costs ten shillings a fathom. As a steamer usually burns six fathoms a day, the firing becomes an expensive item. At certain stations along the river, the wood, cut and stacked, is awaiting the steamers. Wherever we stopped for wood, women and girls flocked on board, bringing new milk, wild fruit, and other things for sale. The price of a sucking-pig was threepence, and of a fowl threepence-halfpenny.

“Mops and scrubbing-brushes are unknown on board, and therefore the deck is not very clean. It is desirable not to visit the cook whilst she is preparing meals. When dinner is announced, we just sit down and eat with thankfulness, asking no questions.”

The voracious, crafty old Governor of Turukhansk, who had been visiting some of the villages, was a passenger on the steamer for about a week, much to Wiggins’ discomfort. He tried to appropriate many valuable articles belonging to him—his watch, a new binocular glass, a new portmanteau, etc.,—in fact, he would have taken every article of value from his cabin, had not the Captain at last effectually secured the door and its lock against the old fellow’s knavish tricks. He was a specimen of the unscrupulous Russian Governor, sent to a distant town, and expected to maintain himself, which was usually done by exacting exorbitant fees, by a system of black-

mailing, as well as by shameless begging. The departure of this official shark from the ship was an infinite relief to Wiggins. "Good riddance! and may his crafty face not shine upon me again for a long time to come."

Sidoroff, the merchant, also joined the steamer at one of the villages, and discussed with Wiggins future plans for working the Yenesei and the Obi. A scheme for thoroughly surveying the Taz and the Yamal peninsulas—with a view of constructing canals to connect the Obi and the Yenesei—occupied much of their attention. The merchant was enthusiastic on the subject, and made Wiggins a tempting offer, in a financial sense, to undertake the work. Wiggins accepted the offer, although the important and expensive work would delay his departure homewards for five or six months. Final arrangements had to be deferred, however, until Sidoroff obtained from St. Petersburg sufficient support for prosecuting the brilliant project.

On reaching the *Thames*, a survey of the wreck was held by the "official shark"—whose knavish propensities have been described above—Sidoroff, and the Captain. She was in the same position in which the Captain left her, but he had some hope that she might be released from the mud-bank if he could obtain efficient aid at Yeneseisk. He was greatly troubled at finding that some of the portion of the crew whom he had left at Igarka had succumbed to the vodka habit, and were

almost in an imbecile condition. He took them on board, and the steamer resumed her journey.

Arriving at Yeneseisk on August 22, Captain Wiggins at once consulted Mr Boiling on the possibility of saving the *Thames*. He offered him 4,500 roubles for floating the ship and helping to place her in a safe creek for the winter. In Boiling's opinion it was impossible, with all available appliances, to float the ship, and that, even if the work were accomplished, it would cost considerably more than the sum named. In the event of the ship being safely brought to Yeneseisk, her repairs, together with the cost of floating, would probably amount to more than she was worth. Under these circumstances the Captain decided to offer the ship for sale by auction. He made the reserve price 6,000 roubles. The Mayor of Yeneseisk—Mr Ballandine—and two other merchants made a bid of 6,100 roubles, and the ship was knocked down to them. Their chief object in buying her was to obtain her boilers. The purchasers stipulated that the ship was to be formally handed over to them at Igarka, where she lay, and this stipulation compelled the Captain to make another journey, more than 1,000 miles down the river. He decided to book his passage in the *Nicolai*, which was starting in a few days for Golchika, with food supplies for the numerous villages on the banks, and barges in tow, laden with wheat and tallow, for the ocean steamer *Fraser*, which was expected to await the arrival of the river-steamer at Golchika.

Before setting off there was another duty—a painful one—to discharge. He had to make arrangements for the overland journey homewards of his craven crew. It should be borne in mind that the conduct of these men was quite exceptional in the Captain's experience. As a rule, throughout his sea-faring life, his crews were devoted and loyal, and many of them, after their discharge, sought an engagement for another voyage. There are letters from seamen still existing showing devotion, if not affection, towards their Captain. He was always careful about the welfare of his crews, and anxious to give them credit for good work, and he never allowed them to incur risks which would endanger their lives unnecessarily. The *Thames* crew was a scratch one, picked up hurriedly at Sunderland, and it seems clear that the Captain failed to exercise sufficient care and discrimination when engaging them.

During this visit to Yeneseisk, Wiggins received invitations from merchants to dine at their houses, and to meet the Archbishop of Krasnoiarsk. He describes the "grand houses, the grand dishes, and the grand company," and takes note of the "sad havoc among the viands" made by the priests—or "popes," as they are called in Russia—who were included in the dinner-parties.

He left Yeneseisk in the *Nicolai* on August 29. His first object in taking the journey was to transfer the *Thames* to her new owners. His other objects were doubtful. He might leave the *Nicolai*

at Okotsk, go overland to Odborsk, and survey the peninsulas ; or he might return to Europe by the *Fraser*, which belonged to M. Sibiriakoff.

Amongst his travelling companions was the Archbishop, on a tour of inspection of the churches down the river. He had a priest in attendance, who turned out a jovial and intelligent fellow.

Wiggins soon got on sociable terms with the Archbishop—"a very chatty, vivacious, quick-eyed, and gracious old gent." "He warmly extolled the size and capabilities of this mighty, but, as he agreed, wasted river." On August 31, just as the English mariner was quietly reading Müller's "*Orphan Schools*," he heard a sudden running to and fro and shouting. "I slipped out on deck, to find that the steamer had grounded on a shoal. All was confusion. The barges were coming down upon us with the rapid tide, threatening to smash our stern in pieces ; but, fortunately, they took the ground in time to avoid a collision. The voyage seemed to me ended, and this vessel in all probability doomed, for I thought that, with the poor means the crew had at hand, there was little hope of getting her off; not a single steam-winch, not a windlass, not a capstan fit to heave up a cat—merely a round piece of wood, stuck through the deck, turning round on a point in the keelson."

The Captain gives an amusing description of the efforts of the skipper, his crew, and of some thirty helpers, who had been summoned from a neighbouring village, to release the steamer. They

were quite ignorant of the right way to handle the ship in her present predicament, and, for lack of proper appliances, "strength and numbers" had to be used, and for a long time ineffectually. Amid the din and confusion on board, the skipper's stentorian voice was heard giving an order, and then another, which seemed quite contrary to the first. Then the Archbishop, who knew nothing whatever about managing a ship, interposed with his suggestions and orders. He had to be obeyed, although dire disaster might follow.

The men were making a muddle about taking out an anchor. "At last, in pity, I was constrained to get into the boat, and show them how we did such things. They made no show of jealousy or resentment at this act of apparent officiousness, like some British tars I have known. They acted quickly upon every hint or instruction, which I gave them by signs, doing most of the work myself." A lot of the cargo had to be discharged, in order to lighten the ship, and at last, after two days' laborious efforts, the men managed to force the ship into deep water.

At the next village the Archbishop landed, to hold a thanksgiving service in the church for the steamer's safe deliverance. "All the people of the village, gaily attired, were there. The Archbishop was received with the most profound reverence, the people struggling to be the first to receive his hand to kiss. The service and hand-kissing occupied about an hour, and the Arch-

bishop, after taking refreshment at the house of the village priest, returned on board, being received with a salute of three—not guns—but screeches from the steam-whistle.

“I secured a tiny birch-bark canoe, which was on the beach—the only one of the kind I had seen on the river. Being so light of construction, it will serve to replace the canvas boat which I had the misfortune to lose. It was a most necessary addition to my outfit for surveying the peninsulas. The Archbishop congratulated me when I came off with the boat, exclaiming, ‘Ah! very good, very good; you have now got an original Tongousk canoe; and when you have finished your work, and return home, you can put it into the museum.’ This was all said in Russian, but I managed to gather the old gentleman’s meaning. He is a well-informed man and also very abstemious—a thing rare to see amongst the priesthood of this land.

“We are steaming very slowly. Should we arrive at Golchika later than September 12, I am told the steamer—the *Fraser*, from Bremen,—is at liberty to go away. At the rate we are going, we can’t arrive there until the 16th or later. Much time is lost by the Captain anchoring at night. He is too nervous, after his accident, to proceed in the dark.

“This morning the Archbishop, marching about the deck, staff in hand, and expatiating on the beauties of the scenery, suddenly called

me to come to the fore part of the steamer. He pointed, as I thought, to a pretty spot on shore. He looked into my eyes, and said, with another emphatic gesture, ‘Neate, neate! tam, tam!’ (‘No, no! there, there!’) He directed my eyes to the bowsprit, where sat a bonny little squirrel, wiping his face with his dainty little paws, quite unconcerned by the fact that enemies were gazing at him. ‘Sabah’ka, sabah’ka’ (‘dog, dog’), said the reverend gentleman, meaning that I should fetch my little Kara to catch it. I slipped away to my cabin, and brought back, not my dog, but some broken biscuit, which I deposited close to where the squirrel sat. He at once ran to it, but on discovering many eyes gazing at him, cut off without tasting it. Then the sailors chased and tried to capture him. I tried to explain that if they left him alone for a few days he would get tame. But it was of no use; they continued the chase, until, sad to relate, the poor little chap popped overboard. He struck out bravely for the shore, with his bushy tail high above water; but I fear that his tail would be submerged before he could reach land, and, by its extra weight and hindrance to swimming, place him in ‘Davy Jones’ locker.’ I suspect that he took his passage in my birch canoe, where he was probably curled up in the bow or the stern, which is formed into a kind of rolled-up point.

“It is astonishing what one can get used to in the way of eating and drinking. My daily

fare consists of black bread, and tea, with sour milk—the latter reminding one of our soft cream cheese at home—in the morning; at 4 P.M. soup and flesh, and in the evening, tea and black bread. With this moderate fare I feel well, and am satisfied. It is long since that I came to the conclusion that simplicity of habits and arrangements are, after all, the essence of comfort to a traveller.

"We have now fairly entered the grand Kamin Pass, with its rocky islets, with high cliffs of basalt frowning upon us. As the rapid stream drives us swiftly forward, whisking us round one jutting point after another of almost perpendicular cliffs, the effect produced by the rapidly changing scenery is most magical, bewitching, entrancing. The old Archbishop, and even the sailors and firemen, are enraptured by the glorious sights that meet their gaze. We, one and all, stand looking in mute enjoyment, the Archbishop now and then expressing himself in loud ejaculations, which, Englished, mean 'Very fine,' 'Very, very fine,' 'Thank God!' and many are the grateful crossings of breasts and reverent bowings of heads both by himself and all around him. This reverential appreciation of mercies received is a peculiar and admirable trait in the Russian, both rich and poor. I admire it most in the latter, who, whether it be for the partaking of a slight meal, or deliverance from peril, or on retiring from deck at night, coming up again in

the morning, relieving one another at the helm, or on beginning a voyage, etc., uncover their heads, and turning towards the east, or towards a church, devoutly cross their breast three times, bowing with each crossing. This custom prevails all over this immense territory.

“Three large boats, housed-in, are being towed astern of our barges. In one of them are about half-a-dozen priests. Last night, as soon as the anchor was down, the Archbishop’s attendant invited me to pay a visit to the priests in the barge. I was heartily welcomed, and soon a ‘spread’ was prepared, in which vodka and wine, of course, predominated. When I declined their pressing invitation to partake, they could not understand my refusal. And this is the case wherever I have been, either at a banquet or at a simple meal—people can’t understand my not drinking. It convinces me that the chances are I shall never become popular. Well, one can afford to lose esteem for the sake of that which is best. This cursed vodka is undermining not only the health of the people, but the very constitution of the realm, both political and religious; for I know that all who indulge in this way are not the men they would be without the drink. If it muddles their brains—as it does—it must muddle all their works, which rule holds good in our own land. After an hour’s chat, in which my pigeon-Russ was severely put to the test, we bade adieu, the elder priest—a jolly, comfortable-looking old gentleman—giving me a

napkinful of freshly gathered cranberries, which he had received at the last stopping-place. One thing astonished me. The old gentleman showed me a chart of the districts of the Turukhansk Government, which contained all the villages where there are churches and priests, and they actually extended nearly to the North-East Cape, on the Khatanga River.

“A great amusement to the Archbishop and his young priest - attendant is the examination of my instruments — sextants, azimuth compass, barometers, thermometers, salinometers, mountain-height barometer, telescope, etc. By pantomimic gestures, judiciously and well carried out, I flatter myself that they see pretty clearly their different uses. Then the guns create intense interest—especially the heavy breechloader, for either shot or bullet — powerful enough to bring down a mammoth, I tell them. To convince them, I let fly a bullet along the face of the water, and, as it flies—leaping along, bound after bound, duck and drake fashion—they stand in amazement to see the great distance the missile goes before finally sinking into the river. They are satisfied it would kill at 1,000 yards, but were doubtful about the mammoth. So I try to convince them, and, setting up a log of birch wood, some seven inches thick, I fire. Not only does the spelter-hardened bullet pass through it, but speeds on over the face of the still waters to a distance of some 500 yards. The doubts of the astonished gentlemen were dispelled.

“The young priest, a very bright fellow of only eighteen summers, standing nearly six feet, and stoutly made in proportion, fraternises well. He sits in my cabin for hours together, to hear what I have to say about England and London, and to see my books. He declares he would like to visit London and Sunderland, but exclaims, clapping his hands on his pocket, ‘Meena neate dingy’ (‘I have no money’). I tell him that no doubt the London steamer will give him a free passage. ‘Ah! but I must have “dingy” for London,’ he replies.

“Anchored at a village where stands the house of four generations of the rich Koshemnikoe family. The Archbishop went ashore and held a service, with the usual formalities. The Captain and crew also landed, to wood-up. Soon after they had gone, an unpleasant event happened. I was standing near the galley, talking to the pilots. The cook, a Russian woman, was sitting near the door of her quarters. The engineer suddenly made his appearance, and, slipping behind the woman, so that she should not see him, caught her by the hair—I thought, at first, in fun. Before one could realise that he was abusing the poor creature, he had her down on the deck, dragging her by the hair from side to side with great violence. Her piercing screams soon made me aware that the cowardly wretch was in earnest. In a moment I was at him, and forcing my way between him and the sufferer, tried to push him away; but, with a demoniacal

face, pale as a corpse, and firmly set teeth, he held on to the hair of the poor screaming woman, and it was evident that he did not mean to let her go until some serious mischief was done.

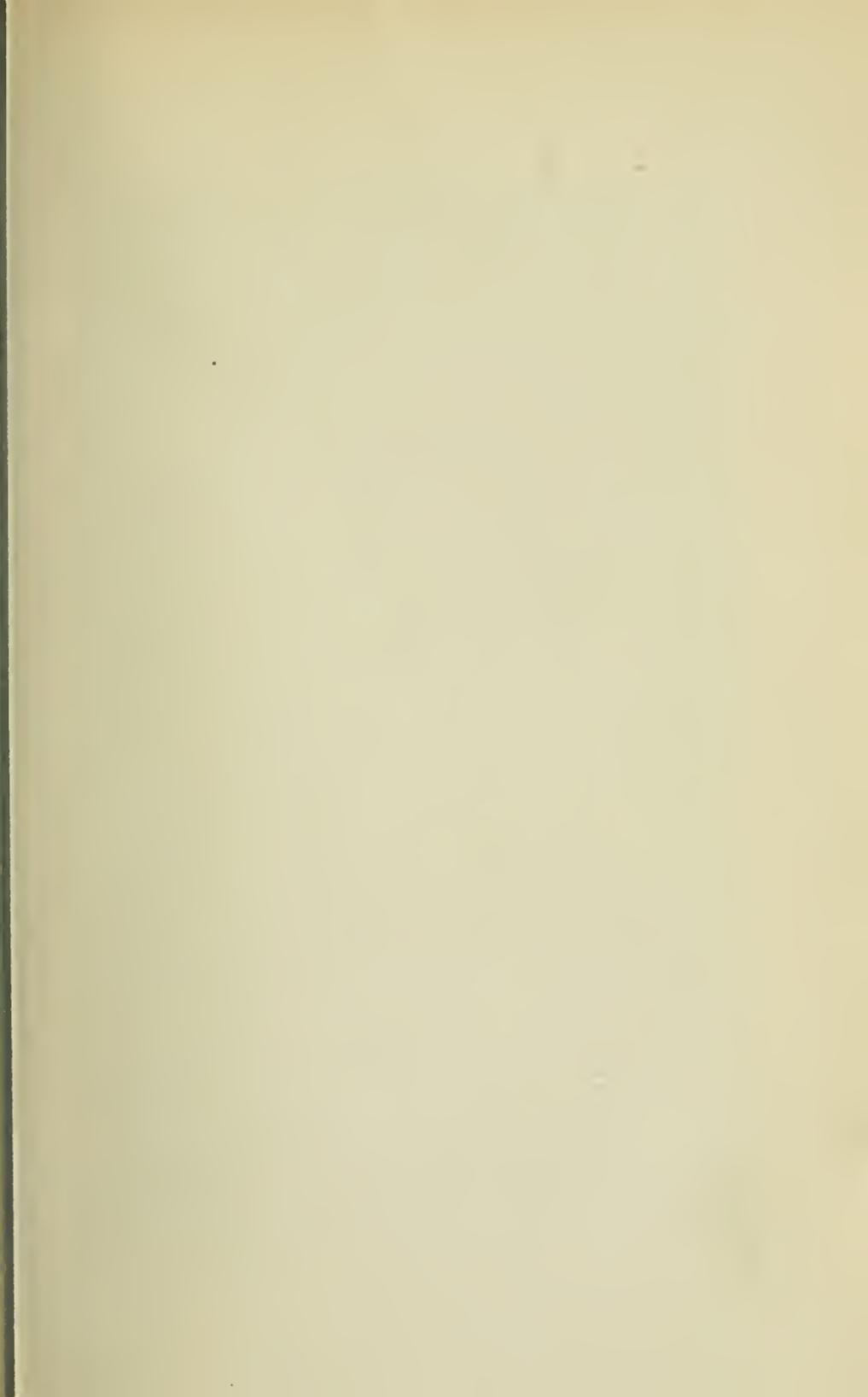
"Then I seized him by the throat, and soon compelled him to gasp for breath, and loose his hold of his writhing victim. With a smart shove, I sent him a yard or two off, to contemplate the fact that, though he was sneak enough to get behind a woman to attack her, or even to attack her at all, he was now face to face with a man, who meant to use all the power he had to prevent such cowardly usage. He made a decided effort to return to his victim, but another smart shove sent the big fellow reeling a few yards away. He had now to remember that he could not get at the woman—crouching and screaming, with hands to her head and ears in an agony of pain—without passing me. He made another attempt, but I approached him with arms extended in a determined manner, and, placing them firmly across his front, gave him to understand that he could not pass that way. I told him that it was cowardly to attack a woman. He tried to explain, in a wild way, something that had happened—something that she had or had not done.

"Presently the second engineer came on deck, and rushed towards the woman with a vicious-looking expression on his face, intending, as I thought, to have a 'go in' at her. I stepped quickly across her crouched-up form, and stood between them. He contented himself by giving

her a good lecture, she screaming all the time. The pilots looked on calmly, and had no intention of interfering; so I had it all to myself. The two engineers went below, but the first engineer soon returned, and invited me to go on shore with him, not to fight it out, but to visit Mr Koshemnikoe. I suspected this was a plot. If I went away with him, the second engineer would finish the business with her. So I declined.

“Darkness set in, and all retired. I awoke at 5 A.M., hearing the Captain’s stentorian voice scolding somebody. Going on deck, I found poor cook sitting on her box, all packed, and ready to clear out—the Captain still scolding her, while the engineers looked on, all smiles. Then I got an explanation from the Captain. The engineers had quarrelled with the cook for some time past, and now things had reached a crisis. The first engineer threatened to leave if the woman was not sent away. The Captain realised the fact that he could do without a cook, but not without his engineer. The poor, wretched-looking cook and her baggage were placed on a boat by themselves, and the boat towed to shore by a man in another *lodka*. The event had a comical side which appealed to the sailors, and as they watched the woman, seated on her box, carried slowly away, they burst into a loud laugh, although they were sorry to lose poor Pollygay, who had been cook on the *Nicolai* for many a year.

“Mrs Salnikoff, and her daughter, the wife of





POST BOAT ON THE YENESEL.

[To face p. 173.]

the third generation of the Koshemnikoes, came on board at the village, the latter with her husband, a lad of eighteen years. The young couple travelled with us to the next village. I was sorry to see the abasement with which the wife took her leave of the Archbishop. On approaching him, she fell on her knees, her face bowed to the ground, close to his feet. On raising herself—he proffering no assistance, as one would think our Lord and Master would have done—she placed her two palms together, to receive his hand, and devoutly kissed it. This reverential act is the usual form of devout salute; but the abasement I had never witnessed, except amongst the poorest. It cannot be healthy for either rich or poor.

“Now and then we pass a *lodka*, full of people, being towed by two or three of the fine dogs of these districts, which are trained not only to draw sledges, but also for towing. They go prancing along the beach, looking very picturesque and happy. The work is evidently play to them, compared with the winter sledging, and the natives seem to treat them very kindly and to value them highly. In my weakness for dogs, I bought four when on my way down the river in April. They are still at the village, near which the *Thames* lies, but I fear they will never see England now. They were puppies, not larger than a kitten, when I bought them for one rouble each, and when we left the ship they were nearly as big as poor old Chang, my English mastiff.”

The Archbishop left the ship at one of the villages, in order to visit a neighbouring monastery. "He was most affectionate in his farewells. All on board, except the heretic Englishman, stood bareheaded to receive his blessing, and Mrs Salnikoff placed herself in the same grovelling attitude as her daughter had adopted. Crossing the deck, he came to me, and raising his hat—which he never does to Russians—he shook me warmly by the hand, and, drawing me to him, gave me a holy kiss on the cheek. He then took his seat in a large housed *lodka*, and started away, with a fair wind and a strong current. He is evidently a highly educated man, and well informed on most subjects. His knowledge of Latin enabled him to understand me easily, at least far more easily than any one else on board understood me.

"I took a walk into the woods, and, from an eminence, looked down on vast forests—verdure everywhere, soon to be enveloped in snow and hard frost—frost so intense that everything save animal life will be, as it were, enshrouded in death. It is not death—only rest. Any one coming here in the spring can witness the swift and marvellous re-appearance of tree, shrub, and flower. Flowers have been known to grow on the wheels of carriages, seeds having adhered to the mud on the wheels, and thus quickly germinating.

"Turning from the woods, I visited the *choom* (tent) of an Ostjak family. Little Kara, my dog, was with me, and she had a narrow escape of being

gobbled up by a large sledge-dog, who faithfully guarded the home of these wandering children of Nature. The occupants consisted of a mother and her five little ones. They were shy, but the mother soon offered me some freshly-gathered cranberries, and I won the hearts of the sickly, dirty-looking wee ones by giving each of them a small silver coin. The mother would not allow me to depart without taking the cranberries, and she asked for a cloth in which to put them. I had nothing but a coloured cotton handkerchief, so gave her this to fill. But she was evidently alive to business, and, overcome by the gorgeous colouring, slipped the handkerchief into her *shouba*, and filled a small birch basket with the berries. Bidding farewell, and walking away, I could not help reflecting how such people are sustained, protected, and cared for by an All-wise Power during their wanderings amid the terrible severities of an Arctic winter—for they are all nomads, performing journeys of hundreds of miles into the forests in the depth of the winter. One asks, how can they exist?

“I then went to the village, consisting of only five or six wooden houses, into one of which I was soon invited to drink tea. Here I bought some flying-squirrel skins, and wanted badly to buy a splendid sledge-dog—a beauty, and well his master knew it, for he declined to sell him.

“Once more on board. We pass the monastery, at a distance of some three miles. It looks quite imposing, as it stands on a well-wooded eminence.

Although standing so high, there are times when it is nearly level with the water ; for in June, when the ice breaks away, and the river floods, the water rises to a height of over 100 feet, just as it does at Kureika. The high side, or bank, of the river is on the right hand as you descend it, as is the case with all very large rivers—a curious phenomenon of nature, caused by the rotation of the earth on its axis. On the left-hand side the soil is mostly low and sandy, and there are innumerable islands of the same kind, all evidently the effect of deposit. The islands are well covered with willows and grasses, a rather remarkable circumstance, when we consider that they are nearly all flooded during the spring, at which period they are scoured by millions of tons of ice for many days together. Some of the immense blocks of ice are about half a mile in extent, and eleven feet in thickness, and one would naturally think they would make a clean sweep of all vegetation. Yet willows twenty feet high, with grasses and flowers in abundance, exist on many.

“ We shall soon be at Kureika now, the scene of so many troubles and struggles, but a spot which will ever hold a place in one’s heart. The inhabitants, although they had their faults, are to be remembered as kind and hospitable people. I hope they may have as kind a remembrance of the first English crew who ever visited their shores.

“ We are passing the old place now, enshrouded with trees, gorgeous with their autumnal foliage.

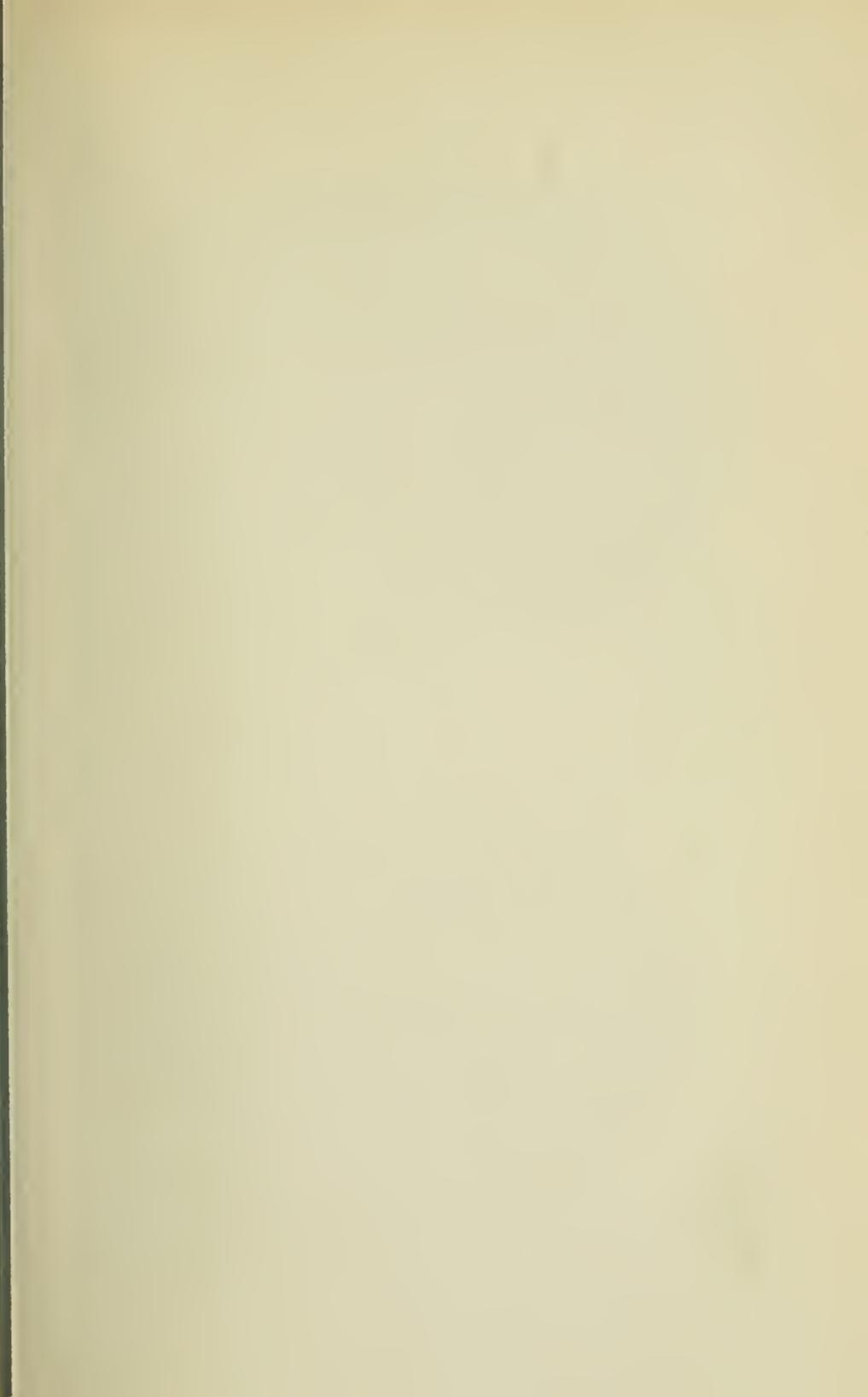
A *lodka* is in mid-stream, some distance up. The occupant is probably the honest old cooper-hermit, on his way home from a journey in search of large willows, to make hoops for his fish-casks. He lives a lonely, quiet life in Mr Turkoff's small wooden bath-house—a little hole, some eight feet square. He told me during my stay at Kureika, that he was once the happy serf of a baron. On one occasion he committed himself to the extent of being very saucy, and for this offence his master packed him off to the Land of Exile, without trial or Government order, and he was thus separated from his family and home at an hour's notice. 'And he was a good master, too, on the whole,' remarked the old man.

"One has a strange feeling when first mixing with the exiles of Siberia. You may be speaking to a criminal of the deepest dye, or to a man doomed to banishment for a comparatively trivial offence. One will tell you that he was an officer in the Army, that he insulted a higher officer, and perhaps struck him, and was promptly exiled. You find that another was a private soldier, that he got drunk, and abused his commanding officer, and was consequently sent off to the distant land. Then you come across one who was a gentleman's servant; in a fit of passion he attacked his master. You may make the acquaintance of an elderly man, who will tell you that in a certain revolutionary uprising he was sitting quietly at home—having nothing to do with the affair, and having no know-

ledge of it—when, without a moment's notice, and without trial, he was sent off far beyond the Urals.

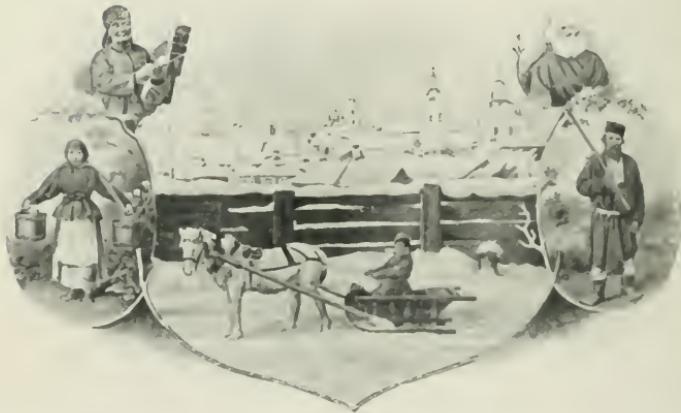
“When exiles are reticent about their past, you may conclude they are guilty of serious crimes. But you need have no fear even from this class of exile, for, owing to the excellent and rigid system of surveillance throughout these vast territories, there can be no wrongdoing without the culprit being easily traced. Moreover, the penalties are so severe that the worst criminals are deterred from wrongdoing by terror of the law and its officers. It is the highly cultured political offender who is the greatest sufferer. He becomes at times the victim of secret jealousy and envy, and his life, already blighted, is made wretched and unbearable.

“But the exiles, generally speaking, have not much to complain of. This land is so rich and fruitful, even for the poorest, that the lack of comfort in any particular instances may be traced to the exiles' lazy or dissolute habits. Moreover, the Government sends annually to each village on these rivers a supply of corn or rye-meal, sufficient to last them, and the natives too, until the next year. They are charged but the bare cost of the article, and are not required to pay until the expiration of twelve months. Each village has a store-house for this food-supply, and the *starosta*, or elder of the village, is responsible for its distribution and for the payment of the same. The exiles obtain more fish than they need. Horses, cows,





RUSSIAN EXILES.



GOVERNMENT HOUSE AND MONASTERY, TOBOLSK, AND FIGURES ILLUSTRATING OCCUPATIONS OF THE PEOPLE.

(Drawn by a Russian exile.)

To face p. 179.

and reindeer they possess in abundance. There is a plentiful supply of berries—even splendid black and red currants, as large as the largest that I have ever seen in England. Thus Nature supplies a most precious anti-scorbutic, and the people have the sense to appreciate this gift, for they store the fruit for winter use. Other foods they obtain from the steamers trading on the river.

“True it is that in times past the sufferings of the poor exiles, when on their way from their native land to these then inhospitable regions, must have been terrible, marched, as they were, in gangs of hundreds, composed of whole different families—the delicate and aged grand-parents, the mothers with their weakly and tender children and infants, the sick and infirm—all compelled to walk the entire distance, along the terrible and tortuous road, bad enough in the summer, but in the winter even strong, hale fathers and sons broke down under the effects of the severity of the weather, and the cruelties of their ignorant and oppressive escorts. But that time is now past and gone. The roads of this mighty highway are good, and transit is comparatively easy, so that few exiles now arrive except in good health; and the Government has doubtless long since learnt the lesson that if she desires to populate and strengthen her dominion in these parts, it is to her advantage to see that the exiles are cared for on the road, and also after their arrival.

“September 9.—A party of Ostjaks, who worked for me at Kureika, came on board. When they had done their bartering with the Captain, I invited them to partake of tea in my cabin, and it was an amusing sight to see them all squat down, huddled together in a tight circle on the floor. It would have done the heart of any teetotaler good to see how they disposed of mugful after mugful of the delightful beverage, gasping for breath as they returned the empty mug to be replenished, and jabbering out their thanks in broken Russian. If one may judge from the satisfaction depicted on their faces as they departed, tea, after all, goes as near to their hearts, if not nearer, than the fiery vodka.

“September 10.—At last we anchored abreast of the *Thames*. Mr Ballandine’s steamer was here. His captain and agent came on board, and I went with him to the vessel. Much to my surprise, he had succeeded in doing a great deal to her, having placed large balks of timber underneath, to prevent her being frozen to the ground, and erected the greater part of an artificial island of timber, of immense size. The space between the ship and the timber is to be filled in with earth. The new owners intend to trust to this device to prevent the ice driving upon the ship, and thus ensure safety until the ice has passed away in the spring. It is a huge business, and will cost much money. It would have cost us more than the steamer is worth. I hope the plan may succeed, for I should

not like to hear that the old ship was smashed up with the breaking up of the ice."

Captain Wiggins, having attended to various details connected with the transfer of the *Thames* to her new owners, returned to the *Nicolai*, which then resumed the journey to Koreopoffsky and Golchika. She was much behind time. The continual stopping to obtain wood for the engine fires was an irritating cause of delay, and Wiggins was wondering how the *Nicolai* was going to complete her journey to Golchika and get back to Yeneseisk without being frozen up. By this time he had abandoned his half-formed intention of landing at Okotsk and going overland to Obdorsk, in order to survey the peninsulas. He was not sure that he might not find himself burdened with the expenses of the expedition.

When the *Nicolai* was approaching Brekhoffsky Island—about seventy miles from Golchika—on September 17, a *lodka* was seen, pulling for the steamer. The *lodka*-men, who were taken on board, brought letters from Golchika, containing the information that the *Fraser* had reached that port on August 21. Her cargo of gold-washing machinery, sugar, and tobacco was placed in a store-house. Her captain waited till September 9, and then, hearing no news of the *Nicolai*, sailed back to Europe.

Thus, mainly through the slow progress of the *Nicolai*, the opportunity of carrying the first cargo of wheat from the Yenesei, through the

Kara Sea, to Europe was lost. Captain Wiggins found out afterwards that an intrigue existed, having its origin amongst certain merchants of Yeneseisk, for preventing the wheat carried in the barges from arriving at Golchika in time to be transferred to the *Fraser*. At that time the merchants in question were strongly opposed to the opening of the ocean route, and were thus attempting to frustrate the plans of the merchant who owned the wheat.

Wiggins was surprised that Captain Dalmann, of the *Fraser*, had not delayed his departure for a few days longer, the temperature being 55° in the shade—a clear indication that the Kara Sea would remain free from ice until the middle of October. It is worth noting, as an example of the variations in the seasons, that when Wiggins was in the estuary at the same time in the previous year a hard frost prevailed.

The *Nicolai* now started on her homeward passage to Yeneseisk, with Wiggins still one of her passengers. The tedious journey of some 1,700 miles was not to his liking, but he accepted the inevitable with a good grace, as his Journal testifies. It is filled with the record of striking incidents, odd experiences, mingled with notes and comments on the natives at the villages where the steamer stopped. Two or three specimens of these entries must suffice.

The *Nicolai* took on board a number of Siberians who were leaving the fishing stations and going

south for the winter. At many of the calling places quantities of dried fish were shipped, for sale at Yeneseisk and other towns. Amongst the fish were “some splendid sturgeon and sterlets, the former weighing about two poods each (72 lbs). I am told they often average seven poods each. They must be very nutritious, composed, as they are, of a considerable amount of gelatine. The real gelatine is extracted in the form of a bag, and also in a long rope-like piece from the whole length of the backbone. It is hung up in the air to dry, and then the bags are strung together, and the ropy part twisted, or rolled up, like wisps of straw, and it is ready for the market. It sells at Yeneseisk for a rouble a pound, in China as much as seven roubles a pound, whilst in England it is extremely dear. An immense profit could be realised by sending it home by steamers sailing through the Kara Sea.

“The temperature has fallen, and the wind blows from the north. Now the splendid white swans are on their way south in immense flocks. Thousands and thousands passed us yesterday, and they are still ‘coming—coming’—not with the ‘spring-tide and the flowers,’ but rather with the sleet and snow showers.

“The Captain of the *Nicolai* settled for me to-day what my name is in Russian. It is customary in these regions to call people after the Christian name of their father, with a ‘vitch’ at the end of it. Therefore my name is ‘Joseph Josepivitch,’ or,

as pronounced in Russ, ‘Eeyooseep Eeyooseepivitch’ —certainly quite a curiosity of a name when it comes out in that fashion.

“The doctor from Turukhansk came on board yesterday. Poor creature! he looks as if, at some period of his life, he had been half scared out of his wits. He opened his heart to me in my cabin over a cup of tea, and ended by informing me that the Government pays him, for tending the natives, the extraordinary stipend of twelve and a half roubles a month. Poor fellow! I no longer wondered at that half-scared look. In the course of our talk he assured me that, after long observation, he had come to the conclusion that indulgence in ardent spirits, in this severe climate, produced not only rheumatism, but even scurvy. This opinion, at least as regards scurvy, is corroborated by Sir Leopold M‘Clintock and other Arctic explorers.

“Yesterday we stopped at an Ostjak village. Men and women came on board, the former to deal with the Captain for their fish, and the latter to do business with the crew with sweet berries, milk, etc. They gathered round me, and, with surprise and pleasure, shook hands, asking the reason of my returning. This, by the way, is the usual enquiry at all the villages, for I am now pretty well known to most of the people on the river banks. I soon gave them an answer by repeating, for the hundredth time, the story of how we missed the English steamer at Golchika. They bemoaned the unlucky

event, and hoped that another year might enable me to succeed in continuing the work, and that we might meet again. The native tribes have been most kind towards the stranger. On our way up and down the river last year on sledges, not one kopek would they take for entertaining us to tea, with bread, fish, etc.; they are to be remembered with gratitude.

"In some places the towering, perpendicular rocks have a most weird appearance. Much of the rock, having been disintegrated by frost, has fallen to the base, where it lies in a confused heap. In its fall it has uprooted huge trees, many of which are hanging down in the most fantastic and threatening manner, supported by only a few remaining roots, which have struck inwards. After the frosts of next winter, these trees will probably be shot down, and, floating along the mighty Yenesei, will find their way most likely, in time to come, to the very Pole itself, and then be carried south to East Greenland, to the shores of Iceland, and perhaps even to Smith Sound. So much for the mighty work of ceaseless oceanic currents."

The steamer arrived at Yeneseisk on October 16. The journey of 1,700 miles had taken twenty-eight days. There were no signs as yet of ice on the river; in fact, the weather was "oppressively close and warm," and the Captain was assured by reliable authorities that for many years past the summers had gradually become longer.

"The town is now very busy, for the gold-

washers are returning from the mines for the winter. It is most interesting to watch the arrivals—some on foot, some in tarantasses, others on horse-back—sturdy men, and almost as sturdy women, astride the wildest, shaggiest, and dirtiest of little horses. The costumes are as varied and as curious as the animals, and most of the returning workers are decent, quiet-looking people."

The roads were almost impassable from the mud, and sledging homewards was out of the question. So Wiggins procured a four-wheeled tarantass, and in this springless vehicle he set off to Europe in the last week of October, and reached England in time to spend Christmas at home.

In the course of thirteen months he had travelled about 12,000 miles by sledge and tarantass. During the same period he had gone twice down and twice up the Yenesei—equal to a journey of about 6,000 miles. If we add to these figures the journeys by rail and sea—twice from Russia to England, and once from England to Russia—the entire distance traversed was upwards of 25,000 miles.

Since November 1876, when the *Thames* was left in her winter quarters at Kureika, the mental strain on the Captain had been continuous and intense. Hope, suspense, and disappointment had changed places in quick and wearisome succession. Since the notable voyage of the *Thames* as far as Kureika, his projects had made no advance, in spite of all his toil and efforts. His overland journey to Europe in the winter of 1876, undertaken mainly

for the purpose of rousing interest in his work, and inducing merchants to send out another ship to the Yenesei—leaving the *Thames* free to carry cargoes to and fro between the mouth of the river and Yeneseisk—proved a failure. When the *Thames* was released from the ice, there sprang up the prospect of returning to England with the first cargo ever shipped from the Yenesei; but with the wreck of that ship the prospect was dashed to the ground. Hope sprang up once more. The trim little *Ibis* might take the place of the *Thames*, the Captain thought, and carry a small cargo to Europe. Again hope vanished when his men turned craven-hearted, and refused to sail in the schooner. When he saw the *Ibis* sail away with a Russian captain, he accepted the inevitable with stoical fortitude, and went to the heartless task of selling the stranded *Thames* to the highest bidder, largely from a sense of duty towards the friends who had enabled him to buy the ship. That task over, up the Yenesei he toiled once more, to hand over the *Thames* to her new owners, and with hopes divided between the important work of surveying the peninsulas and a swift passage home in the *Fraser*, to try again to kindle enthusiasm in England. With both plans unrealised, he journeyed back to Yeneseisk, and set off to England, his only stock-in-trade being one great absorbing idea—unchecked in the slightest degree by failure of hopes—together with indomitable pluck and amazing energy for carrying out the idea to its consummation.

Whilst Wiggins, in straitened circumstances, was pursuing his mission of commerce and peace on the Yenesei, Russia was engaged in spending £120,000,000 on her desperate struggle with Turkey. The war broke out on the day he began cutting the *Thames* from the ice, and went on until after he had reached home and was laying plans for another voyage.

## CHAPTER IX

### FROM THE OBI TO THE THAMES

Frustration of plans—Appeals to English merchants—

Mr Oswald J. Cattley—Successful voyage of the *Warkworth* to the Obi—First cargo brought to the Thames from Siberia—Splendid quality of wheat—Difficulties of navigation at the mouth of the Obi—Voyage of the *Neptune*—Congratulations—Letter from Lieutenant Weyprecht—From Tiumen to the Thames—Lecturing—Encouragement of competition—The best kind of monopoly—A foolhardy expedition—“Eggshells of steamers”—Development of the sea-route stopped by speculators—Russian disaster—Voyages of Wiggins in southern seas — Acquaintanceship with General Gordon.

ON his way home, Captain Wiggins made tentative arrangements to supervise the building of a ship at Tobolsk, for a merchant on the Obi, and take her down that river to Europe with a cargo. Difficulties about insurance stopped the realisation of this scheme. He also entered into preliminary negotiations with the well-known firm of Messrs Wardropper Brothers, of Tiumen, for the purchase of engineering and shipbuilding works, the object in view being the opening of direct trade between the Obi and England. Ships

of light draught were to be built at the works for carrying goods down the river, and by the ocean route to England. This scheme also had to be abandoned, owing to inadequate support in Russia and England.

The Captain's efforts, by public lectures and personal influence, to induce merchants and capitalists to form syndicates or companies, for the purpose of working the trade of either the Yenesei or the Obi, seemed destined to have little result. His voyages, so far, had convinced the lords of commerce that a large investment of capital would not be safe from the extravagant demands of the ice-king, or from the perils and vagaries of unsurveyed rivers.

It must be borne in mind that the Captain never attempted to keep back or disguise the dangers and costly contingencies in which an expedition might be involved. His appeal to rich men, summarised and put into plain words, ran thus: Here is a splendid opening for trade; but before it can be utilised to great commercial advantage, a large sum of money must be spent. The ultimate aim in view is the bringing of England and Russia into more friendly relationship by means of this new bond of commerce. The money which you spend now may, or may not, yield a financial return. In any case, the establishment of the sea-route is bound to become an accomplished fact sooner or later. Are you prepared to expend money on such conditions?

The Russophobist class—far more numerous thirty years ago than now—promptly declined to co-operate. Rich men, with friendly feeling towards Russia, shared the Captain's admirable aims, but were not fired with enthusiasm equal to his, and consequently hesitated to unite in a strong, bold effort, with the determination to make the enterprise a permanent success.

At last, through the co-operation of a British merchant in St. Petersburg—Mr Oswald J. Cattley—a little scheme was initiated and carried out, bearing notable and valuable results. Mr Cattley, through Mr William Byford, of London, chartered a screw steamer, the *Warkworth*, of Newcastle, of 650 tons burden, for a voyage to the Obi. The Captain took the ship to Liverpool for a cargo of salt, Sheffield goods, porcelain, glass, etc., whilst some of the Obi merchants arranged with Mr Cattley to have a cargo of wheat and other produce ready at the mouth of the river for conveyance to England.

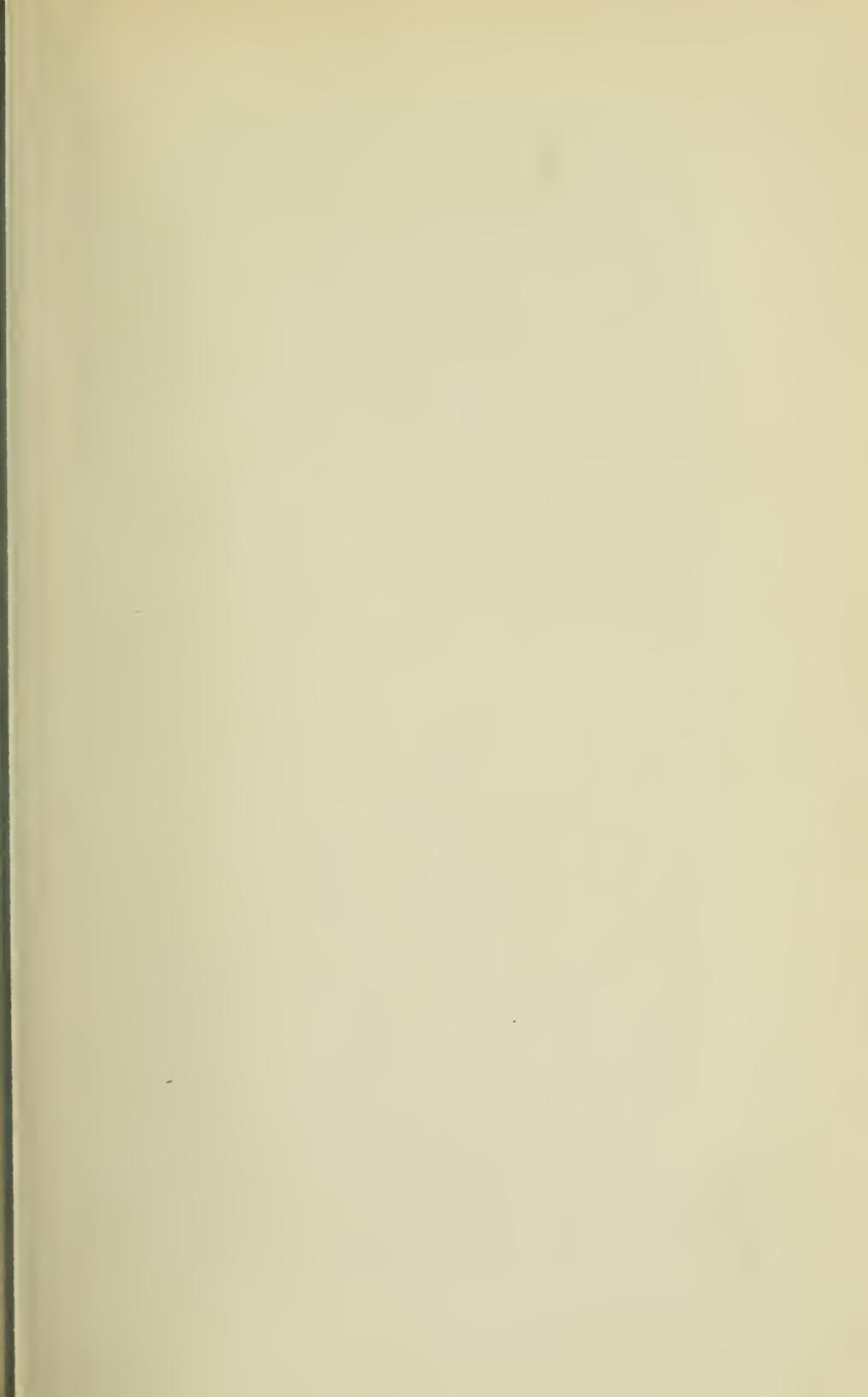
The *Warkworth* left Liverpool on August 1, 1878. Crossing the Kara Sea, she steamed up the Gulf of the Obi, having met with but very little ice. She had some difficulty in crossing the bar at the estuary, but, helped by a strong north wind, she reached her destination in safety—a few miles beyond Nadim. A large *praam*, about 300 feet long, laden with 300 tons of wheat, linseed, hemp, flax, etc., awaited her. Having discharged her cargo, the *Warkworth* took on

board the contents of the *praam*, and sailed for home. The bar again stood in the way, and the ship had to be relieved of some tons of her freight before it was possible to clear the obstruction.

She arrived in the Thames on October 2, after a successful voyage of just two months. Her cargo was the first ever brought from Siberia, through the Kara Sea, to this country. The experience of the voyage fully verified Wiggins' calculations, and solved the problem of carrying on ocean commerce with the Obi. The wheat brought home proved, on analysis, to be even better than Indian wheat.

Whilst in the Obi Gulf, Wiggins met the Hamburg steamer, *Neptune*, which was bound on the same errand as the *Warkworth*. By his aid the *Neptune* was carried over the shallows. She was then loaded with wheat and taken back to Hamburg in safety. She was commanded by Captain Rasmussen, and sent out by Herr Bartning, of Hamburg, co-operating with Herr Funck, a merchant of Barnaul, a town in the Government of Tomsk.

Captain Wiggins was the recipient of many congratulatory letters on the completion of his successful venture. One of the most acceptable of them came from his friend and brother-explorer, Lieutenant Weyprecht. "I most sincerely congratulate you," he wrote, "on your splendid success of this year. You are certainly the first who



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LOWER TOWN, TOBOLSK



pointed out the possibility of sea-communication with the Obi and the Yenesei—or, at least, the first who undertook to show it. I am quite sure that, not every year, but nearly every year the same voyage can be performed. . . . Experience and comparison of different years and different places have convinced me that, whenever one part of the Arctic Sea is free from ice, there exists an accumulation of ice in another part. The more open the sea is on the western side, the more will it probably be closed in the easterly direction. . . .

“I am very glad that your disinterested endeavours have been rewarded finally with distinct success. I hope also that your pecuniary sacrifices in some measure will be compensated.”

It has been mentioned that one of the Captain’s ideas was to get ships built at Tiumen or at Tobolsk, load them with Siberian produce, and take them direct to England. A demonstration of the feasibility of this idea took place soon after he reached London in the *Warkworth*. A Moscow merchant had the *Express* built at Tiumen. She was of light draught, and only roughly finished in hull, spars, and rigging. She left Tiumen with a cargo on August 2, and was towed down the river some distance. After grounding, but without injury, at the mouth of the river, she reached White Island on September 30, cleared the Kara Sea on October 12, and then had a splendid run to the Thames, where she arrived on November 5.

During the winter of 1878-9, Captain Wiggins accepted several invitations to deliver lectures on his voyages and the prospects of trade with Siberia. In these lectures he kept back nothing—favourable or unfavourable—concerning the working of the sea route. It was his desire to give all information possible, not only for the sake of creating interest, but also that he might be the means of helping navigators, of any nationality, who might be sent to the Obi or the Yenesei by merchants and capitalists. He had not the slightest wish to monopolise, for his own use, or for the use of any firm or syndicate with which he might become connected, the experience and information that he had gained. His knowledge and experience were for the benefit of the world, and not for doling out, by special favour, here and there.

Some of his friends thought that he would safeguard his own interests by exercising a little reticence, and one of them wrote:—"I am afraid you are giving too much information by lecturing that others will take advantage of and will not benefit you." The Captain's answer is not available, but we can easily imagine its character, and can be sure that his friend never ventured a second expostulation of a similar kind.

When there was a prospect of a syndicate taking up the work, another of his friends, who was connected with the syndicate, hearing a rumour that Wiggins intended to co-operate in a different Siberian venture, expressed a hope that he was not

going to join "a rival concern," because he (the writer) would certainly do his best to prove "a thorn in the side of any competitor."

This paltry threat instantly aroused the Captain's dudgeon. "I hardly think you would be so foolish," he answered, "to enter upon the work with the intention of impeding or destroying honest competition, based upon the Christian principle of 'Live and let live.' No, no, my dear sir, this has never been my policy, and I trust it may never be yours. It is a great work, and, as a consequence, there is room for very many workers. Believe me, if ever a monopoly is obtained by any one party, it will be, not by struggling to oppose others, but, rather, by a well-based system of carefully navigating the very best vessels that can be constructed for the purpose, employing the right kind of men, and making proper arrangements at loading places."

The success of the *Warkworth*, and of other vessels in 1878 directed the attention of commercial circles to the question of the ocean route, and the immediate future seemed, to Wiggins, to be full of promise. But, unfortunately, the people who decided to utilise the Captain's pioneering work, by sending out ships with cargoes, did so with unsuitable vessels, and on a plan rashly and crudely devised. Their expedition ended in disaster, and stopped the development of the sea route for several years. "Speculators rushed in," said Wiggins, "and spoilt the business."

The story of this foolhardy venture can be told in the Captain's own words. It was given in the course of an interview, which Mr W. T. Stead had with him in 1888, published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

"Never was an enterprise more certainly doomed to failure from the outset than was the despatch of the little fleet of merchantmen, which left England for the Obi in 1879. Five large sea-going steamers of deep draught, and about as capable of standing the nip of an ice pack as so many matchboxes, were chartered at large freights to go to Nadim, on the Obi. They started a month too soon, in defiance of the strongest warnings. Five thousand tons of Siberian goods were purchased in the interior and sent down to meet them at Nadim. But none of them ever reached their destination. And for the very best of all reasons—it was impossible. Cavalry could as soon ride across the Channel as these big eggshells of steamers could have delivered their cargoes at Nadim. For eighty or a hundred miles north of Nadim there stretches shoal water stormy enough to be impassable by river steamers.

"It is this bar of shallow sea which constitutes the greatest obstacle to the navigation of the Obi, and that is the obstacle which we have to overcome. We have to lift the lame dog over the last step of the stile. But these speculators in 1879 knew nothing of the conditions of the navigation. They ignored the advice of those who did; and so the whole enterprise came to a most ignominious

collapse. They did not even get to the outer edge of the Obi shore. They cruised about in fog surrounded by floating ice for a month, without ever making their way through the Iron Gates, and at last, growing thoroughly alarmed, they gave up the attempt, and brought their cargoes home again. The 5,000 tons of Siberian produce sent down for shipment was wasted, and so both in England and in Siberia the project of opening up a new trade route became utterly discredited. But nothing happened in 1879 which I did not predict before the ships left port, and therefore there is nothing whatever in the experience of that year to discourage us to-day."

Captain Wiggins, although his advice as to the choice of vessels had been disregarded, was offered the command, or the pilotage, of these "eggshells of steamers"—the *Mizpah*, the *Amy*, the *Brighton*, the *R. J. Alston* and another—but, of course, he declined having anything to do with the venture. The serious mistake of the organisers of this expedition, and the consequent loss, created ridicule and distrust, and no one in England cared to take up the work again until the year 1887.

In 1880 some Russian ships, belonging to a wealthy firm in Moscow, met with disaster. The steamer *Louise* and two schooners were lost in the Obi Gulf, and a third schooner sank in the Bay of Baidarata. Another steamer, the *Oscar Dickson*, belonging to M. Sibiriakoff, failed to enter the Yenesei Gulf, and had to winter in the Bay of Gyda.

The owner, who was on board, left the ship in December, with some of the crew, and contrived to reach Obdorsk, thence travelling to St Petersburg overland. The failure of these vessels arose mainly from lack of skill and experience, and had the same effect on Russian commercial circles as the failure of the English fleet, in the previous year, had upon merchants at home.

It really seemed as if Captain Wiggins was the only man who thoroughly understood the conditions of safe navigation in those waters—the only man capable of conducting a ship to either the Obi or the Yenesei. Wiseacres, not inclined to accept such a conclusion, put their heads together, and decided, in the first place, that Wiggins had been favoured merely by “good luck,” and, in the second place, that the Kara Sea was not an open sea, except in unusually warm summers.

With the prospects of Siberian work so gloomy, Wiggins abandoned, for the present, all idea of resuming his enterprise. He was led to that decision, in a great measure, by the persuasions of friends, who urged him to consider his financial interests, and try to repair, in other seas, his shattered income. Left to himself, he would have attempted, probably, to carry on the work, in spite of the unfavourable impression existing in England and Russia. The inefficiency and folly of others could not bank up the fire of his enthusiasm.

Some of the Captain’s friends, and particularly Mr John Ridley, and his daughter, Miss Annie E.

Ridley—afterwards her father's biographer—made strenuous efforts to enlist the support of Australian merchants and shipowners for the Siberian work. Mr Ridley, whose name was a household word in South Australia, in connection with the invention of the "Ridley Reaping Machine"—which proved of such immense value to the Colony—had considerable influence with leading merchants in London and Australia, but the appeals which were made met with no encouraging response.

One wealthy shipowner stated that his chief objection to render aid was that the work had in view "the interests' of a foreign nation." The Captain, writing to Miss Ridley, met the objection with an apt rejoinder. "Such folks seem to have narrow views when they express themselves in such selfish terms. If they only reflected for a moment, they would surely make the simple discovery that the people of one nation cannot promote the interests of another nation without promoting their own welfare—and honour."

Another rejoinder was called forth when the same shipowner remarked: "Charity begins at home; we must not forget our own household or our own country for the sake of doing service to another." "I note that your friend's charity," the Captain said in another letter to Miss Ridley, "is that of the world's charity in general—that is, it 'begins at home.' No wonder that such people become millionaires! . . . Still, it would not matter so much that their charity began at home,

providing they did not keep it all at home. . . . If the millionaire would only summon courage to explore a gold district in another country, and take from it from five to seven tons of gold annually, then he might be able to realise the fact that one can do a service to a foreign country without neglecting one's own."

Writing to the same correspondent, the Captain expressed a strong wish that the Hudson's Bay Company, "not being over-flourishing at present," should turn its attention to the north-east. "Although under the rule of a despotic Government, it would meet, nevertheless, with every encouragement, have every protection, and realise an immense fortune. The inhospitable lands of the north-west, for certain geographical reasons, are not to be compared with Siberia, with its inexhaustible treasures. For the same reasons the Hudson's Bay Company will never become the wealthy concern that the Muscovy Company of old became. How satisfactory it would be if a concern like the Hudson's Bay Company, with all its resources and experience, its splendid ships and men, took up this new enterprise, and, by working it as no other nation's company could, realise a monopoly of its own—the only right and proper kind of monopoly that ought to exist. Well, if they, or others of our enterprising merchants will not do it, there are those of other nations who will."

Between 1880 and 1887 Wiggins devoted his

energies to voyages in southern climes. He made a surveying voyage in the Indian Ocean, and took ships to the Cape, to South America, the Mauritius, and the West Indies. Three of the principal ships which he commanded were the *Sirocco*, the *Maenatchy*, and the *Nourmahal*. Wherever he went he tried to awaken interest in his Siberian projects, and always took with him his lantern-slides, to illustrate any lectures which he might be invited to deliver.

Many interesting incidents occurred in the course of these voyages, and one of them, at least, left an ever-enduring impression upon the Captain. This was the formation of an acquaintanceship with General Gordon, the future "hero of Khartoum," who, it will be remembered, went out to the Mauritius, in 1881, to hold a temporary command for a few months. He travelled either to or from the Mauritius in a ship commanded by Wiggins, and the two men quickly found that they were closely allied in sympathies and aspirations. Wiggins never forgot, and always treasured, the wise and elevating utterances which fell from the General's lips in their daily conversations. They parted with regret that, probably, no opportunity would ever occur for the renewal of their intercourse; but the devout and hearty "Godspeed" that came from each was a fresh incentive to faithful service.

## CHAPTER X

### VOYAGE OF THE *PHÆNIX*

Formation of the Phœnix Company—Sir Robert Morier—

Mr H. N. Sulivan—Arrangements for working the Yenesei—Incidents of the voyage of the *Phœnix*—Sun and cloud effects—Rocks on the Yenesei highlands—The blind “king” of the Samoyedes—Forcing a way through the rapids—Tribute to the Captain’s skill—Ovation at Yeneseisk—Congratulations from England—Visit to gold mines—Krasnoiarsk—Christmas festivities in Siberia—A teetotal banquet—Sledging under difficulties—Social entertainments at Tomsk—The Aristocratic and Democratic Clubs—Tomsk University—Doing business *en route* for home—Mr Sulivan’s visit to St Petersburg—Concessions obtained by Sir Robert Morier from the Russian Government.

IN the year 1887 the way was opened for Captain Wiggins to make another venture in Siberian waters. Several of the Captain’s friends, and a few other gentlemen, who had been attracted by the prospect of carrying on a regular and profitable trade with the merchants on the Yenesei and the Obi, were brought into communication with each other. Various plans were discussed, and it was at length resolved to form a small company for the purpose of buying and fitting a ship, freighting

her with a suitable cargo, and sending her up the Yenesei.

It was known to the Company that Sir Robert Morier, British Ambassador at St Petersburg, had felt the deepest interest in the efforts of Wiggins to establish an ocean trade between England and Siberia. The Company therefore laid their scheme before him, requesting that he would use his influence to get the Russian Government to admit the cargo into Siberia free of duty. Sir Robert gladly undertook the task, and obtained the desired concession.

The Company bought the steamship *Phœnix*—273 tons register—and named themselves after her—the “*Phœnix Merchant Adventurers (Limited)*,” afterwards altering their name to the “*Phœnix Company (Limited)*.” The principal organiser and managing director of the Company was Mr H. N. Sullivan, a son of Admiral Sir James Sullivan—who assisted Darwin in the voyage of the *Beagle*—and a member of the firm of Messrs Eicholtz & Co., of Newcastle. Among the Adventurers who held a considerable stake in the concern were Wiggins’ old friend, Mr C. L. W. Gardiner, Major W. P. Gaskell, and Mr S. N. Corlett, a London merchant. Wiggins was appointed Marine Superintendent, and Adviser to the board.

The details of the scheme were as follows. The *Phœnix* was to take in a cargo of salt at South Shields. Wiggins was to be her commander, and his brother, Captain Robert Wiggins,

chief officer. Mr Sulivan arranged to accompany the expedition, as business director, and in order to see for himself the prospects of establishing a trade. The *Phœnix* was to proceed through the Kara Sea, and up the Yenesei as far as Yeneseisk, and there discharge her cargo. She was to winter at that port, in the charge of Robert Wiggins. At the breaking-up of the ice in the spring of 1888 he was to take the steamer, with a cargo, down the river as far as Koreopoffsky or Golchika. Captain Wiggins and Mr Sulivan proposed to return home overland, and another ship was to be sent out from England in the summer of 1888, to meet the *Phœnix*, and exchange cargoes with her, the *Phœnix* returning to Yeneseisk, and the other ship to England. If the double expedition proved successful, and further concessions could be obtained from the Russian Government, similar arrangements were to be carried out year after year.

Mr Gardiner, with his usual liberality, supplied the expedition with a fine steam-launch, for leading the way up the river.

The *Phœnix* left South Shields on August 5, 1887. She called at Vardoe, and left that port for the east on August 23. In five days she reached the Waigats Straits, and on the 29th entered the Kara Sea, where the water was nearly clear of ice. "I shall never forget the magnificent spectacle that greeted us in the Kara Sea," writes the Captain, "the first morning after entering it.

We had steamed about a hundred miles beyond the Straits, and had got clear of the fogs hanging about there, and at 3 A.M. the sun rose, and tinted the whole cloud-laden sky from extreme east to extreme west, until the heavens were brilliant with colour—gold, red, pink, and purple. In some parts the clouds were ‘mackerel back,’ in others light and fleecy, while, in the distant west, huge, heavy masses had gathered, all tinged with purple and gold. The sea, and even our vessel, were ablaze with the reflection of the gorgeous scene overhead. In the evening of the same day we witnessed again a transcendently beautiful sight, for, as the sun went down, the whole canopy of clouds, overhead and far away to the eastward, was flooded with golden light, while ship and sea were bathed in a ruddy glow.

“On September 3 I landed at a deserted spot on the highlands of the Yenesei. Near this place we sheltered with the *Thames*, in 1876, in a fearful gale, and I named the refuge Thames Haven. On the present visit the sun was shining brightly. The rocks were the most wonderful that I ever beheld, Fingal’s Cave alone excepted. The high, rugged rocks were deeply furrowed vertically by the action of the melting snows, and stood out in hundreds of mighty columns—the sea dashing and bellowing in the dark caverns. It can easily be imagined that the effect was weird and fascinating. Unfortunately, as we were going full steam, no photograph could be taken.”

After encountering a severe snowstorm, the ship reached Sidoroff Bay, the first inhabited place on the Gulf, and the travellers received a hearty welcome from both Russians and Samoyedes. A young Samoyede was taken on board as pilot for a short distance, and Patchka, the old and blind "king" of the Samoyedes, who greeted the Captain with overflowing joy, also joined the ship. This man, although blind, had piloted the *Thames* a long distance. He knew "every inch of the way," and described each island, every safe channel and dangerous point as the ship approached them.

At Dudinka a young Russian count was engaged as pilot, but was incompetent for the work, although making himself useful in other ways. Some of the cargo was discharged at one of the villages, and then the *Phœnix* steamed ahead, the launch leading the way, and the woods and the forests coming into view.

"About 1,000 miles up the river we came to the Kamin Pass, the most dangerous spot in the whole journey, on account of the very rapid current and the treacherous shoals. It was generally believed that the depth of water here was no more than five or six feet. The *Phœnix* drew about nine feet. However, I took the central deep-water passage, and, finding twenty fathoms, put the vessel at it, pushing right through the circuitous gorge—rocks and cliffs towering high overhead—but leaving plenty of room to navigate



BLIND "KING" OF THE SAMOYEDES, WITH PRESENTS  
FROM THE CZAR.

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the vessel. Steadily the sturdy little *Phœnix* ploughed her way under the fullest pressure of steam that could be given her; and well she did her work, for in an hour and a half she succeeded in forging her passage through water, where no other steamer had dared to go, simply because their speed was insufficient to push through the rapids.

"The villager who had volunteered to show us the road, seeing me take the channel, drew in his breath, and stood aghast, watching, in silent awe, the progress of the vessel; nor was he relieved till he saw us come through into the broader and somewhat less boisterous stream beyond. I took the wheel myself when we approached the rapids, and got safely through without once touching a shoal or a rock."

Mr Sullivan bore public testimony to the Captain's able seamanship on this voyage. "I cannot praise too highly the skill of Captain Wiggins," he said, "in navigating his vessel through unknown seas and places where the charts are not correctly laid down. He practically felt his way in the dark from the Kara Straits with the lead. Observations could not be taken, owing to the fog, and the skill he displayed was a very high tribute to his capabilities as a navigator."

The *Phœnix* anchored off the city of Yeneseisk on October 9, having steamed, without any mishap, over more than 2,000 miles of this intricate river, which had never been surveyed, and on

which there was not a single buoy, not a single warning indication of shoal, sandbank, or hidden rock.

“ On our arrival we mustered all hands on deck, fired our gun, blew our steam-whistle, and gave three ringing British cheers. Thousands of people then flocked down to the river to see the first ocean steamer that had ever entered their harbour. They swarmed on the deck, and it was a difficult matter for our agent to force his way through the crowd to get to the post office, and telegraph our success to England. Two answers were flashed back, each consisting of a word—‘Hurrah !’ ‘Congratulations.’”

The Governor and other officials, together with the merchants, gave the Captain and Mr Sulivan a most hearty reception, entertained them at their houses, discussed with them the question of an ocean trade, and made them acquainted with the evidences of progress and enlightenment in this wonderful little town, of 10,000 inhabitants, in the heart of Siberia.

When the *Phænix* had discharged the remainder of her cargo she was shifted into her winter quarters, and the Captain and Mr Sulivan, with some of the crew, started on December 1, in sledges, for Krasnoiarsk, another busy town on the Yenesei, about 250 miles south of Yeneseisk. On the way they visited some of the large gold mines, and noticed the primitive methods in operation for obtaining the gold. The owners begged the

Englishmen to bring out modern machinery in their next ship.

Krasnoiarsk ("Red Cliff") got its name from the vivid red sand of which the surrounding hills are composed. "It has wide streets," writes the Captain, "many large houses—some illuminated with the electric light—a large college, and free schools, a fine cathedral, and many other churches; a large market-place, roomy Government buildings, and public gardens, beautifully laid out.

"We were inundated with visitors at our rooms, and the hospitality of the people was unbounded. I had ordered a good dinner for our men on the English Christmas Day. The news spread, and we were invited to dinner to the house of some ladies, who speak English. We found a costly and elegant house, with immense rooms, parquet floors, white marble mantel-pieces, with open English fire-places, an art gallery with very valuable paintings and statuary, and the furniture throughout of the best. We were welcomed by the lady of the house—an elderly Quaker-like dame, speaking fluently both English and French. The other visitors consisted of relatives of the lady, and we made an agreeable party. The dinner was thoroughly English, but included splendid apples and grapes from the Crimea. I sat by our hostess, and conversed on many topics. My abstaining from wine was a surprise, and led to some talk on the subject of temperance, and the lady readily

admitted that there was great need for reform in the drinking habits of the country.

“On New Year’s Eve we went by invitation to a doctor’s, who had intimated that we were to partake of ‘ploom poodine.’ At 10 P.M. we had tea. At midnight we tried some singing, and then, shaking hands all round as the old year stole away, expressed our good wishes to each other, and to absent friends. Dinner followed in true English style. Nothing stronger was provided in the way of drinks than fresh milk, soda-water, and other effervescent beverages, this being the first teetotal banquet ever served in this house—an unexpected compliment paid to me, which I heartily appreciated. We were accompanied to the door by our kind host, who bade us adieu at 2.30 A.M.”

The travellers left Krasnoiarsk on January 5, and in three days arrived at Tomsk. Writing to his wife, the Captain gives an idea of the journey, and of the gay and festive scenes in which the English visitors participated.

“We have just arrived here, all well, but have experienced a severe jolting and thumping on the bad roads—so much worn and damaged by the enormous traffic of caravans of sledges, which are now making their way with goods and produce of all kinds to the various markets and fairs. Thousands upon thousands of sledges are passing to and fro, east and west, and so the roads are worn into large holes and dykes every few hundred

yards, the consequence being that sledges with trotting post-horses bump into these holes. The jolts and bangs are most excruciating to those even who are accustomed to sledging. However, Mr S—— and the men have borne it well so far, but now stand in need of a rest.

"We have been received already by the Governor, who was very kind. He gave us what information he could, and hoped that we should bring out a steamer to the Obi this year.

"I left off this letter to go to a Christmas Tree party, given on the Russian Christmas Day by the captain of Sibiriakoff's steamer." Here the Captain draws a vivid picture of the large house, the spacious room, the swarming children, the music, the dancing, and the exciting scene when the time came for distributing the gifts, with which five huge trees were laden.

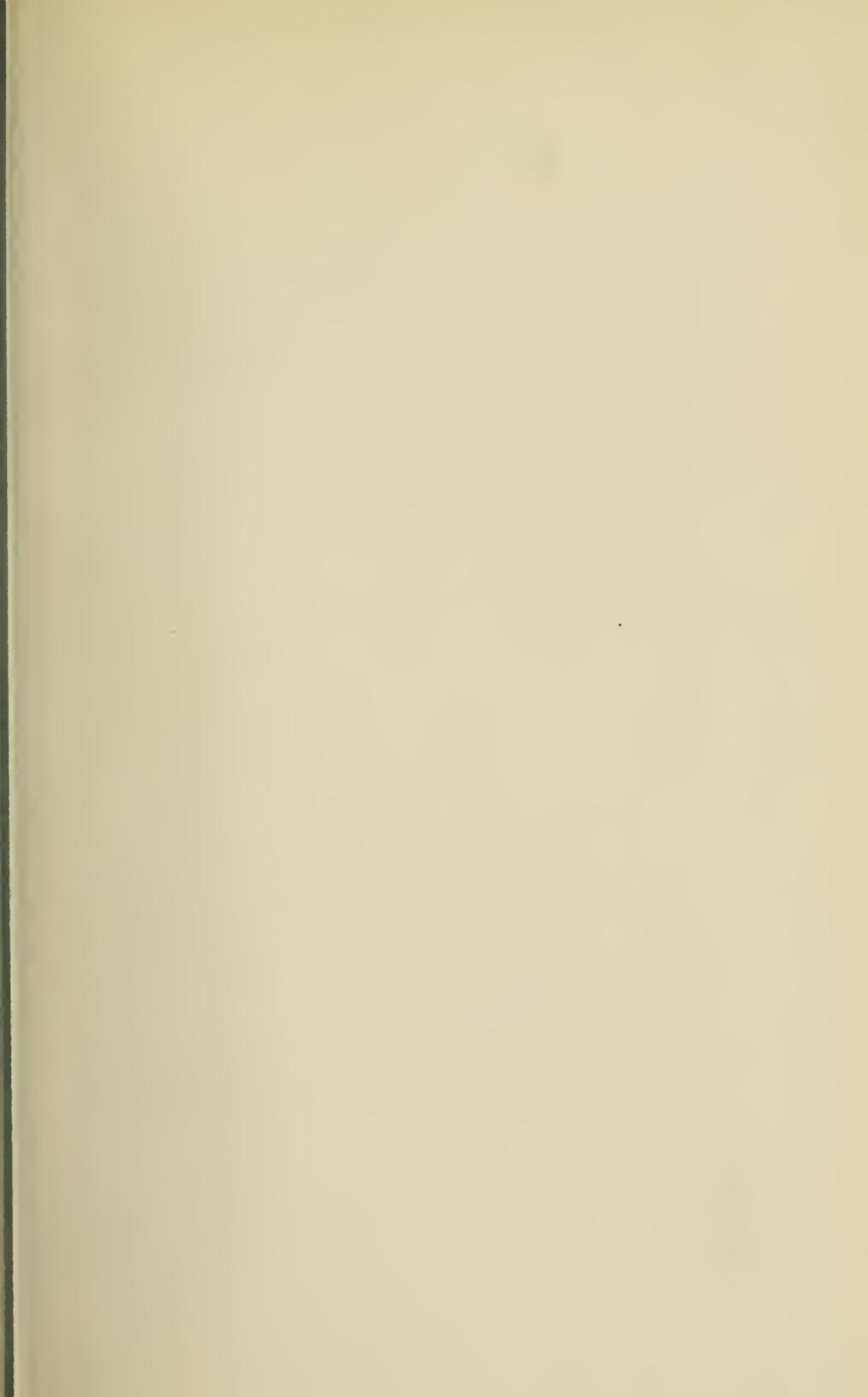
"The next evening we were invited to a grand musical *soirée* at the 'Aristocratic' Club (there is also a 'Democratic' Club). It is a splendid building, furnished luxuriously, and we heard high-class music, instrumental and vocal. These happy gatherings are termed 'Family Concerts,' and all who sing or play are volunteers from the people assembled. The rich dresses and refined manners would have charmed some ladies I know in London.

"The next night I went to an entertainment, more interesting to me than the first, for it reminded me of one of our Infirmary Christmas

parties. It was held at the ‘Democratic’ Club, and was intended for the enjoyment of children. Admission was obtained by tickets, costing a shilling each; and adults had the privilege of buying tickets and distributing them among the youngsters of all classes. There were three immense trees, fully lighted, and crammed with presents. These having been distributed, every youngster had an opportunity of a dance. A gold-miner, whom we took for the M.C., was the most active man present in picking out the wee ones, one after another, and whisking them round for a few circles. It was one of the happiest social meetings I ever witnessed.

“Last evening the immense Theatre was open for the performance of a light opera, and as our tars have had no entertainment here, and we do not want them to attend the low-class entertainments—of which there are many—we thought it only right to give them a treat. So we took two boxes. ‘Togged up’ in their best suits, they were highly pleased with the performance—a pretty burlesque, with first-class music.

“Yesterday we inspected the University—now nearly ready for students—given to the town by a wealthy merchant whose father was a nomad Samoyede. It is a vast building, standing in extensive grounds, and has botanical gardens, conservatories, lecture-halls, and a library of 60,000 volumes. Sibiriakoff has contributed hand-



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MARKET IN MOSCOW.



somely to the cost, and his full-length portrait in oils hangs on the walls.

"The electric light is the one thing needed in this town. Many merchants have told us to bring it out, for the whole town would adopt it, and it would not have to compete with gas, there being no gas here."

"Of course, I have not time to tell you a hundredth part of what we have seen. Mr S—— is more astonished than ever, and wired to Major Gaskell the other day: 'W—— has not told us of half what is to be done in these parts. Immense commerce to be done by sea.' We are now ready to start."

Proceeding on their journey, the party stopped for a few days at Tiumen, and then went forward to Moscow. At all the towns visited Mr Sulivan made arrangements with the merchants, for the next season, for the purchase and sale of merchandise. A delay of several days occurred at Moscow, owing to an outbreak of small-pox amongst the sailors, one of whom died. All the travellers went into quarantine, and were treated with the utmost consideration and kindness by the Mayor, the sanitary officials, and especially Mr Hornstedt, the British Vice-Consul. Captain Wiggins took his men to Libau, and thence by ship home, where they arrived in February.

Mr Sulivan went on to St. Petersburg, and had interviews with Sir Robert Morier and the Russian Ministers of Finance and Commerce

respecting the projects of the Phœnix Company. He had two main objects in view—to obtain further concessions from the Russian Government respecting the admission of goods into Siberia free of duty, and to secure permission for the *Phœnix* to take a cargo of Siberian produce down the Yenesei, from Yeneseisk to the river's mouth, which was an exclusive right of the Czar's subjects. To anticipate, by a few months, the result of these interviews, Sir Robert, by his persistent appeals to the Russian Government, obtained a further concession of five years for the free entry of British goods up the Yenesei, and a similar concession, but limited to one year, for the Obi. He also obtained permission for the *Phœnix* to take a cargo of Siberian produce down the Yenesei for transmission to England.

## CHAPTER XI

### INFLUENTIAL SUPPORT

Chartering the *Labrador*—Enthusiasm of Sir Robert Morier—Wiggins summoned to St. Petersburg—In a predicament on the frontier—At the British Embassy—Consultations with Sir Robert Morier and Russian Ministers—Sir Robert's despatch to Lord Salisbury—Mr Victor Morier decides to sail with the Captain—The Ambassador's speech at South Shields—Inspection of the *Labrador*.

As soon as Captain Wiggins and Mr Sulivan reached England, the Phoenix Company looked out for their second ship, which was to carry a cargo to the mouth of the Yenesei. At length they chartered a fine, full-rigged Arctic steamer, of about 300 tons burden, named the *Labrador*, owned by Mr G. W. Ashdown, which had done good service for the Hudson's Bay Company on the coast of Greenland. She was built of wood, and plated with iron, to enable her to cut easily through the ice. She was to be loaded with general goods, gold-washing machinery, electric light and power apparatus, destined for the gold-mines and towns on the Yenesei.

Whilst preparations for the voyage were going on in England, Sir Robert Morier, whose interest in the Siberian projects had reached an enthusiastic point, was making efforts to secure concessions and privileges from the Russian Government. He was anxious that Wiggins, who had won a high position of regard among some of the Czar's ministers, should himself come to St. Petersburg, to answer any enquiries which Sir Robert, from lack of sufficient information, might be unable to deal with. The Captain responded to the Ambassador's urgent invitation, and in June, 1888, set off for the Russian capital, accompanied by Major Gaskell. A few extracts from letters written by Wiggins to his wife will serve to indicate the course of events during his visit.

His first letter, written from Eydtkuhnhen, on June 17, discloses an awkward predicament in which he was caught. "I fancy I hear you trying to pronounce the above name of a place, and wondering where it is. It is a frontier town on the German side of the Russian border. Then you will say, 'What on earth is he after there?' Ay, there's the rub. Who would have thought it possible that such an ancient Russian traveller would have forgotten his passport! Yet so it is. Arriving yesterday evening at the Russian station not a thousand yards from here—where all had to expose baggage and passes—imagine the feelings of ye wanderer when confronted with the dread official, in full uniform, sabre, etc., at his side, demanding

to see my passport. I stared — tried to look innocent — gave up my coupon book — all no go! Then came a high official, in fuller uniform, who coolly informed me that I must return to this place and get a passport from London. I straightened myself, and explained that I was on a visit to the English Ambassador. All no use. So, amidst all the bustle and turmoil of turning out hundreds of boxes for inspection, I had to beat a retreat ignominiously, and deposit self and baggage in the returning train, and was again brought to this sweet spot. I at once telegraphed to the Ambassador, explaining how matters stood, and have received a reply this morning at 4 A.M., which I enclose, just to let you see what his Excellency must think of me."

He goes on to say that he was not entirely to blame for omitting to bring with him his life-passport, and then describes in eloquent phrase the scenes of "rural bliss and simplicity," which passed before his eyes on the railway journey. He was now "awaiting results of the Ambassador's unwearied applications on my behalf. Has he not been doing this ever since he heard of the unromantic name of 'Wiggins'?"

In the next letter (June 23), written at the Hotel d'Angleterre—which he always patronised—the Captain reports that he has been holding a consultation with Sir Robert at the latter's bedside, for his Excellency was laid up with an attack of gout. In intervals of the conversation Sir Robert

dictated letters to his secretary, in reply to letters from Ministers on the Siberian schemes. The Captain was anxious to get back to England, for he had much to do preparatory to the sailing of the *Labrador*. “We have still to see several ‘big guns,’ and those we have seen urge us to visit them again, and all this takes up time. Sir Robert himself is now due in London, and has put off his visit entirely on our account. . . . How I wish we had Mr Gardiner here! he would agree so splendidly with our dear old advocate, Sir Robert. I can just imagine seeing them together. And Lady Morier is so very open and amiable too. Sir Robert seems to look as much—if not more—on the romantic side of my work than on the political. He was very pleased with Mr Sulivan, and I am glad of it, for Sulivan is working more like a nigger than the son of gentlefolks. The Major is charmed with this Venetian-like city, with its huge palaces, etc.”

On June 26 the visit was drawing to an end. “Since my last letter little has been done; the Whitsuntide holidays and festivals have interfered. To-day the Major and I have to make calls (by invitation) on several of the Ministers and others. We hope to leave on Thursday; indeed, Sir Robert has decided to leave then. He is now busy trying to get a longer concession for the Obi. They have given only one year, and it is hardly worth while undertaking the additional risk and expense. Sir Robert advises us not to go to the Obi, in the





SIR ROBERT B. D. MORIER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

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event of the Government not extending the time. This is the point now under discussion. Major Gaskell is very anxious to give up the Obi this year because of our rather crippled means.

“ We spent a pleasant evening at the Embassy yesterday—dining at 7 p.m. Only Sir Robert and Lady Morier, their daughter, and Sir Robert’s *attaché*—young Mr Eliot—present. The Major persisted in edging out all my escapades, and, amongst others, the French attempt. Sir Robert will have all out. During the evening a book was handed to him. ‘ Ah ! ’ said he, ‘ that’s Eden’s “ Frozen Asia,” and the Emperor has just returned it. You see, he has now read all about your voyages ; and I am determined he shall know all you have done for his Empire. What a pity it is you were not here two months ago, for then the Emperor had time to devote attention to your work ; but now he is preparing for the summer recess, and will retire to the country in a few days.’ ”

In two or three days Sir Robert, Captain Wiggins, and Major Gaskell went to England. A few hours before his departure, the Ambassador addressed the following despatch to the Marquis of Salisbury, then Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs. Although this document—at least, in its early paragraphs—travels over ground with which the reader of these pages is already familiar, it is desirable to reproduce it in its entirety, for no summarising could do justice to Sir Robert

Morier's estimate of Wiggins, his work, and his aims, as set forth in his despatch.

"ST. PETERSBURG, June 30, 1888.

"MY LORD,—For the last year and a-half I have uninterruptedly laboured to procure the success of an enterprise which, though at present of very modest proportions, and having for its sole basis the intrepidity, energy, skill, and perseverance of a single British ship-master, is yet potential with commercial revolutions, the importance of which can hardly be exaggerated, and which, by opening up new channels on a vast scale for British imports and exports, is capable in the course of time of the largest results.

"For the proper comprehension of the scheme, I must presuppose access to a large-scale Russian map, giving both the European and Asiatic halves of the Empire. It will be seen in such a map that there runs out at the juncture of the two halves what appears like a monster promontory, crescent-shaped, between, speaking roughly, the 70th and 75th parallels of latitude. This apparent promontory encloses a gulf, into which there pour themselves, from far away south, two rivers, that for size and volume of water have been compared by M. de Lesseps to the gigantic streams of America, navigable for vessels of deep draught up into the very heart of Asia to the frontier of China—the Obi, and the Yenesei. What I have described as

an apparent promontory and gulf are really islands and a sea, the former described collectively as Novaia Zemlia, the other as the Sea of Kara.

"The promontory, when examined closely, is seen to be pierced by three channels—one at its immediate base, namely, the Yugorski (or Pet's) Strait, a very narrow inlet; one further up and much wider, called the Kara Gates, or also the Iron Gates, from their supposed closure by ice; a third, the Matochkin Straits, narrow and tortuous. The navigation of the Kara Sea had always been supposed to be impossible owing to the ice. A serious attempt was made by Admiral Lütke to establish a regular passage out of the sea some forty years ago, which did not succeed, and the theory was set up that no commercial road could be established across it to the west. The question, however, had become one of those nautical puzzles which ambitious navigators dream about and become possessed by. This kind of possession laid a strong hold, also about forty years ago, on the imagination of Joseph Wiggins, a young English mate on board a brig connected with the Archangel trade. Learning that 'Kara,' in Tartar, meant 'black,' he inferred that such a name could never have been given to an ice-bound sea, and that therefore the Kara Sea implied open water. The dream of being the man who should open up this water-way never left him. Having acquired extraordinary distinction in his profession (he was for six years Examiner for the Board of Trade), and been

successful in various ventures, he fitted out, as soon as he had money enough of his own, a small Arctic-built steam yacht of about 120 tons—the *Diana*—with which he solved the problem brilliantly in the year 1874, by sailing through the Kara Straits to the mouth, first of the Obi, and afterwards to the estuary of the Yenesei. The voyage had no commercial character, and was exclusively devoted to scientific exploration, with the result that certain definite bases were once for all established, which demonstrated by actual experience what, by a happy intuition, Mr Wiggins had *à priori* laid down, viz. that at certain seasons the Straits, the southern portion of the Kara Sea, including the whole of the coast to both rivers, and the estuaries of those rivers, must be free from ice. These facts were, that the Gulf Stream, which in previous voyages he had ascertained beyond a doubt moved eastwards along the coast of Lapland towards Novaia Zemlia, instead of, as formerly supposed, going straight in a north-easterly direction from the White Sea, would not all of it, with straits to pass through, run round to the northern end of the promontory. Given the entrance of the Gulf Stream through the straits into the Kara Sea, and the immense volume of water carried down from south to north by the two giant rivers, he concluded that, when these two forces had had time to do their summer work, the ice would be driven to the north of the gulf, and kept there till the winter again established its dominion over the entire

region. It was, thanks to this first successful voyage by the *Diana* and to the principles thus laid down by Mr Wiggins, that Nordenskiöld was enabled the following year (1875) to make his first voyage to the Yenesei, and ultimately his celebrated journey, through the Behring Strait, round the world.

“A scientific expedition of this kind, fraught with the greatest commercial possibilities for the future, undertaken, entirely at his own expense, by a man of small means, ought to have met with far other encouragement amongst mercantile classes in England than I regret to say it did. Mr Wiggins, however, was not to be daunted. He had exhausted his means in the *Diana* expedition. He could only afford next year to make the attempt in a sailing-cutter of 25 tons, and a crew of eight men. He was blown back in his attempt to pass the Kara Straits, but, nevertheless, did invaluable work during six weeks by taking soundings this side of the Straits, and proving that all the approaches were free of ice. At last, in 1876, a Russian mine proprietor in Siberia—M. Sibiriakoff—offered to contribute £1,000 for the accomplishment of the voyage through the Kara Sea into the Yenesei, and a similar sum was forthcoming from an English yachtsman who had come across Mr Wiggins in northern waters, and had learnt to appreciate his work. A 100-ton steamer (the *Thames*) was fitted out, and with her Mr Wiggins not only crossed the Kara Sea, but ascended the Yenesei for nearly

1,000 miles. The ship was laid up for the winter, but unfortunately came to grief with the breaking up of the ice and the rush of the mighty ice-laden river in the following spring. However, there could be no doubt that the problem had now been solved, and that there existed a navigable water-way, if one only knew how to navigate it, from the heart of Asia and the untold mineral and agricultural storehouses of Siberia, 2,000 miles inland, to the markets of Europe.

"Accordingly, next year (1879), a Liverpool firm placed the *Warkworth*, a 500-ton steamer, at the disposal of Mr Wiggins, who successfully carried a cargo and brought one back from Nadim, at the mouth of the Obi. But the postulate, 'if you know how to navigate it,' was not afterwards borne in mind. Five steamers were next year freighted from England for the Obi, and one by M. Sibiriakoff for the Yenesei. Mr Wiggins was offered the charge of the British expedition, but refused it, and condemned the ships as completely unfit for the work. On the other hand, he offered to take charge of M. Sibiriakoff's ship, who, from patriotic motives, wishing to do the work with Russians, refused. All six ships came to grief. The result was universal disappointment, both in England and on the Obi. Merchants from the inland Siberian towns had been induced to send goods down the Obi for ships which never arrived, and British houses had consigned goods which were never delivered. The theory that the Kara Sea

might now and again be free of ice, but could not be depended on, and that Mr Wiggins had just had a run of luck and no more, firmly established itself. He, however, stuck to his theory, and, to make a long story short, he finally succeeded last year in finding a few bold spirits, who, having formed themselves into a small limited Company, and assumed the name of 'The Phœnix Merchant Adventurers,' bought an iron steamer of 400 tons, freighting her with a cargo of samples, with which Mr Wiggins started from Newcastle-on-Tyne for Yeneseisk—the first large town on the Yenesei, some 2,000 miles from the mouth of that river, and within a few hundred versts from the Chinese frontier. For a very long way from the mouth up the river the navigation was practically unknown, and Mr Wiggins, with a ship drawing eleven feet of water, had to pick his way as best he could, and with such shifts as he was able to have recourse to, not the least interesting the having been piloted for a considerable distance by the blind Chief of a Samoyede tribe, whose accurate description from memory of the landmarks enabled the *Phœnix* to ascend in safety.

"On the 9th October 1887, for the first time, a sea-going steam-ship, carrying her own cargo from across the ocean, cast anchor and landed her goods in the heart of Siberia. She was received with enthusiasm by the population, from the Governor downwards, and every kindness and encouragement shown to Captain Wiggins

and his crew. Nor can this be wondered at, when we reflect that the sentiments evoked could not have been different in kind from those which would be felt by men buried alive suddenly seeing themselves brought into contact with the rest of the world. I had at an early date, and when the Company of 'The Phoenix Merchant Adventurers' was first formed, been in communication with the Russian Government as to facilities for the enterprise. These stout-hearted and independent north-countrymen asked for no subsidies, monopolies, or special privileges, nor did Mr Wiggins claim any recompense for the boon conferred, by his self-denying labour and skill, on Russia. They only urged that, seeing the enormous risks and difficulties of the venture, they should not be charged duties for the goods they had successfully conveyed through the dangers of the Arctic region. I met with a very warm response on the part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, not only from M. de Giers and M. Vlangaly, but more particularly from Baron Osten Sacken, the head of the Commercial Department, who, being one of the Vice-Presidents of the St. Petersburg Geographical Society, had from the first followed Mr Wiggins' career with the greatest interest. I said that, as it was not in accordance with the views of Her Majesty's Government to associate themselves directly with any private commercial enterprise, I did not wish to urge the cause of 'The Phoenix Merchant

Adventurers' in my official capacity, but, seeing the very great international importance, and the special advantages to Russia of opening up a commercial waterway between the heart of her Asiatic possessions and Western Europe, the extraordinary sacrifice of time and money, and the skill, judgment, and perseverance displayed by my countryman in solving this great question, I was convinced that the Imperial Government would regard it as quite natural that I should throw myself heart and soul into the scheme.

"I will not trouble your Lordship with the long negotiations carried on through the Foreign Office, which did everything to assist me, with the various Ministries called upon to deal with the matter. I succeeded in getting the whole of the cargo of the *Phœnix* admitted free of duty, and am now in a position to state with great satisfaction that I have obtained a five years' concession for the free entry of certain classes of merchandise up the Yenesei, and a similar concession of one year for the Obi.

"The greatest difficulty I have had to contend against, however, was obtaining permission for the *Phœnix* to navigate the 2,000 miles of river from Yeneseisk to the mouth of the Yenesei. By Russian law riverian navigation is the exclusive right of Russian subjects under the Russian flag. The whole enterprise, however, would have fallen through if the *Phœnix* had not been allowed to take a return cargo down the river and meet the

fine Arctic wooden steamer, the *Labrador*, fitted out for this year's venture, and which is to bring a cargo from Newcastle-on-Tyne to exchange at Golchika, at the mouth of the Yenesei, with that from Yeneseisk, for there are as yet no Russian steamers on the river of sufficient draught and power, or with the necessary fittings, to convey the machinery and other heavy goods which constitute the bulk of the imports. I have only obtained the permission for this year, but I have every hope of its being continued until the Siberians have themselves organised a river service to Golchika.

"The additional risk and expense of the river navigation constitutes a heavy strain upon the limited resources of 'the Phoenix Merchant Adventurers,' of which they would gladly be relieved. Accordingly the Manager of the Company, when at Yeneseisk last year, offered the *Phœnix* for sale if the buyer would establish a regular service with her to meet the ocean ship. But with the shrewdness which strongly characterises the Siberians, the answer returned was: 'We have seen the *Phœnix* safely navigated up the river; we will wait and see how she gets down.'

"If this year's operations succeed, and confidence in the undertaking is once firmly established, I feel no doubt that the great Siberian mine proprietors, who are a patriotic and enterprising body of men, will organise an efficient steam

system to Golchika, and establish warehouses there for the storing up of goods, leaving to the Phœnix Adventurers the task of transporting them across the Arctic Seas.—I have, etc.,

“ R. B. D. MORIER.

“ *P.S.* — I enclose a small scale Map, by Mr Eliot, which will facilitate the comprehension of Captain Wiggins’ route.

“ R. B. D. M.”

The centre of interest was now changed from St. Petersburg to Newcastle, whither Sir Robert Morier had come to inspect the *Labrador*, lying at South Shields, and to bid farewell to his son, Victor Albert, who was to accompany Captain Wiggins as a passenger. This promising young man, just twenty-one, impelled by the love of adventure, and by the prospect of an unconventional holiday in regions far beyond the beaten track of tourists, expressed an earnest wish to take the voyage. Influenced mainly by their high esteem for Captain Wiggins, his parents needed but very little persuasion to give their consent to the proposal. Lady Morier consented, “only on account of the absolute trust she placed in Captain Wiggins,” and “on the condition that he (Victor) engages solemnly to obey the Captain implicitly, and to be guided by him.”

Sir Robert, in a letter, furnished the Captain with instructions as to the supervision of his son. He wished him, if opportunity offered, to be taught the rudiments of navigation, and the Captain was

to insist that he wrote up his diary daily. The young man was to be at liberty to complete his journey in the *Labrador*, or to return overland to St. Petersburg. "Remember," says Sir Robert, in concluding his letter, "that I wish you to regard yourself as my boy's friend, and, to a certain extent, mentor. I now commend my boy to you. He is my only son, and I should not have let him go, much as he wished it, if I had not believed that his going would largely aid an undertaking in which I take a very keen interest—first, because it is worthy of the best traditions of our national history; second, because it is a great humanising effort to bring into close and friendly relations two great Empires, that ought to be friends, not foes; third, because of the very great personal interest with which you inspire me. God speed you."

On July 14 a select party, consisting of Sir Robert Morier and his son, Captain Wiggins, Mr Sullivan, several of the leading men of Newcastle, and Mr Philip Sewell, a botanist—who was going out in the *Labrador* to collect specimens—set off from Newcastle Quay in a steamer, lent by the Tyne Commissioners, for the purpose of inspecting the *Labrador*. Luncheon was served on the journey down the river, and speeches were made.

Sir Robert Morier expressed the pleasure it gave him to be present to witness the inception of their enterprise. He said they were now only putting on their armour, and there was an old adage warning us we should not boast until that armour was put

off. He should therefore speak as cautiously as possible. But, looking calmly at this occasion, the fact of a vessel leaving an English port and travelling to the mouth of the Yenesei, there to meet another ship that had travelled 2,000 miles down the river in order to exchange cargo, was a very important and noteworthy event. He thought it quite possible that, modest as that undertaking was, Newcastle men might look back to that day as a very important one in its annals. Just let them think and consider what it meant—it meant the first regular commercial voyage from any port in the world to the heart and centre of Asia; to within a few hundred miles of China; to what had been described by Monsieur de Lesseps as the “treasure-house of the world.” That vast basin of the Obi and the Yenesei, abounding, as it did, in mineral and agricultural and every description of wealth, had been till now closed to commercial enterprise from the impossibility of carrying its wealth away to the civilised parts of the world.

This was the first regular voyage. It was not a voyage of exploration; it was not a voyage of discovery. It was a voyage which was the result of voyages of discovery and exploration, and it was the beginning of the establishment of a regular commercial undertaking—an undertaking which commercial men would regard with interest, as the first of a series of commercial journeys. We had not yet arrived at that position that Mr Cook might issue return tickets to Central Asia—that

would come in time ; but at any rate we had got to the point of beginning a regular series of voyages upon a commercial route that had been marked out, as it was now, as a completely accomplished fact. This had been achieved, as they all knew, through the genius, the energy, the perseverance, and the seamanship of one man, namely, Captain Wiggins. It was the confidence which Captain Wiggins' name inspired which constituted the heart and soul of the entire undertaking. He (Sir Robert Morier) had proved the personal confidence he placed in Captain Wiggins and in the safety of the route established by him by unhesitatingly allowing his own son to join the expedition.

If this voyage was successful, it would be the bringing together of the productive forces of Russia with the productive forces of England. This was a very important point, because this exchange of merchandise and produce was believed to be, by old Cobdenites like himself, the greatest force for repelling the evils of war, and the negative forces of the world. Every voyage made by Captain Wiggins to Siberia had been so much towards bringing together two nations, well fitted to complement each other, and amongst whom, if they knew each other properly, most kindly and cordial relations must always exist. He could speak from personal experience, and Captain Wiggins, who had been amongst the people, and who knew and understood them well, would bear him out. They were a simple people ; there was much natural

sympathy amongst them with Englishmen, whom they regarded with the greatest kindness, and every effort made to increase the intercourse between the individuals of the two nations was a step made in the direction of the maintenance of good and friendly relations. If the enterprise of the proprietors of that vessel was looked at from a mere geographical and mercantile aspect, the revolution which was that day commenced would be the greatest that had been accomplished in the century.

M. de Lesseps spoke of the extraordinary natural feature of three great rivers, going from the south to the north, through a country where lay abundant wealth. The great difficulty to be solved, he said, was to establish sea communication between these rivers and the rest of the world. Establish that, he remarked, and the commerce of the world would have added to it untold wealth. Under the reign of Ivan IV., Chancellor and his brother navigators opened up European Russia to commerce by the discovery of Archangel. If, under the reign of Alexander III., Captain Wiggins accomplished a corresponding work in the opening out of Asiatic Russia, thus bringing two of the greatest countries of the world into the friendly relations of commerce, he would have done something of which every Englishman would feel proud. Sir Robert, in conclusion, took the opportunity of wishing success to Mr Sulivan, as representing the owners of the vessel, and to Captain Wiggins as its commander, and he wished the ship God-speed.

Captain Wiggins briefly responded. He said what first set him to this work was the knowledge that these rivers existed, and it seemed to him a sin to know that trade might be done there and not make use of the knowledge. Twenty or thirty years ago he conceived the idea of making a voyage to the Yenesei, and about fifteen years ago the means were at his command, and nothing could hold him. He went out, and he had found no difficulty in reaching these places ever since. Captain Wiggins went on to describe the various voyages he had made to the Yenesei, down to the successful trip of 1887. They were now going to try again, and he was convinced the route would be open. He had no doubt they would make the voyage in safety, barring legitimate accidents. He could not guarantee absolute immunity from risk, but barring accidents, they should have no trouble in getting the *Labrador* safely to her destination. He had a nice selection of general cargo, and he had that better sort of cargo—some passengers. He never expected to have the honour of carrying to Siberia the son of the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg. Mr Morier had a rough-and-ready journey before him, but he might depend upon having a very enjoyable trip, and that he would return from it with a new stock of experience and improved health.

Mr H. N. Sulivan also replied, and said that at a meeting of the Tyneside Geographical Society, on the previous day, a resolution was passed





CAPTAIN WIGGINS IN THE CABIN OF THE *LABRADOR*.



OLD CHURCH AT KHABAROVA.

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wishing God-speed to Captain Wiggins, and hoping they would have him back soon in the Tyne to lecture on his journey. He had to express the deepest thanks to Sir Robert Morier for the aid he had given them in obtaining from the authorities in St. Petersburg freedom from duty for five years, and he proposed Sir Robert's health.

When the visitors stepped on board the *Labrador*, they found all hands busy getting in cargo, stores, and coals, but, in spite of the confusion, they managed to make a satisfactory examination of the vessel and her fittings; the steam-launch and three whale-boats attracting special attention.

She was manned by a crew of about twenty. Captain McClelland, an old Arctic sailor, had agreed to accompany Wiggins, and Mr John Crowther, of Peterhead, who was a member of the Bell-Smith expedition to the North in 1881, had been appointed mate.

## CHAPTER XII

### ATTEMPTS THAT FAILED

Sailing of the *Labrador*—Bad news from the Yenesei—Waiting at Vardoe for the *Seagull*—Mr Victor Morier and Mr Philip Sewell—Starting from Vardoe—The expedition doomed—*Labrador* at Khabarova—Rescue of shipwrecked seamen—Mr Morier's sledging adventure—In the Kara Sea again—Tantalising news—Robert Wiggins and the *Phœnix*—Sir Robert Morier's sympathy with the Captain—The Anglo-Siberian Syndicate—The Captain at the Society of Arts—Commerce “travelling hand in hand with Peace”—The friendship of Russia—A “lion” of the season—Audience at Marlborough House—“A great historical man”—The *Labrador* starts again—The fiasco—Mismanagement and muddle—The Captain's defence—Too many masters.

THE *Labrador* left the Tyne on July 16, 1888, and arrived at Vardoe on August 3, after a fairly good passage. At this place the ship coaled, and was on the point of sailing for Siberia, when a telegram from Newcastle reached the Captain to inform him that the *Phœnix* was hopelessly stranded in the Yenesei, and he was to wait at Vardoe for further instructions.

The Directors of the Company were almost at their wits' end. A vital link in the arrangements

had failed. Without the *Phænix*, or a small steamer of the same class, the cargo of the *Labrador* could not be carried up the river. The *Labrador* herself was far too heavy a vessel for that purpose; probably she would have been stranded at the very entrance of the river.

The Directors did the best they could to meet the difficulty. Their funds were low, and they were unable to buy or charter a thoroughly suitable vessel of shallow draught to replace the *Phænix*. They secured a small paddle-steamer, named the *Seagull*, and sent her off to Vardoe with all speed, intending that she should accompany the *Labrador*, and take her cargo from the mouth of the river up to Yeneseisk. A month passed before the *Seagull* reached Vardoe.

We get a few glimpses from Wiggins' letters of the occupations and diversions of the passengers during that wearisome month of waiting. "My 'Boy' (Mr Victor Morier) is splendid—no sign of ailment—knocks about in true sailor fashion—looking a young giant amongst the men—and so genial. We have, by chance, an old Portuguese cook, shipped in London. The 'Boy' talks to him in his own lingo, and as the poor old chap can't read or write, but has letters from friends at Goa (in the Portuguese Indian settlements), the 'Boy' has won him over by reading his precious letters to him, and writing home for him. It was the Goa Railway that Sir Robert arranged when he was Ambassador at Lisbon.

"August 30.—Vardoe. We are still here—grass on ship's bottom some six inches long! *Seagull* expected to-morrow. I fear the end of all this delay will be inability to land my cargo at Golchika, sending only some sixty tons up in the *Seagull*. Mr Sewell has had a good time dredging and botanising, but has exhausted this place now.

"September 4.—Just off. Sorry to say *Seagull* is a poor affair, with paddles! Should there be ice, she can't follow us. Shall perhaps have to send her back. Hope for best. Our 'Boys' all well. They have made every one here fall in love with them, because of their kindness and goodness. There will be a scene at parting, for the Consul's dear old lady is so fond of them. Our cabin full of flowers, sent on board yesterday. Fear *Labrador* will have to bring back her cargo."

Evidently the Captain had but little hope of the *Seagull* accomplishing the work for which she had been sent. Before the ships left Vardoe, Wiggins gave her Captain explicit instructions how to act should the vessels separate and lose sight of each other. In such an emergency, certain places were appointed where the ships were to look out or wait for one another.

On the second night after leaving Vardoe a severe gale, accompanied with fog, drove the ships apart, and the *Labrador* saw no more of her humble little consort. The *Seagull* managed to make her way as far as Kologueve Island, where she found shelter. The crew took fright; ice-floes, fogs, and

gales dispersed the last shreds of valour, and they refused to proceed further: the expedition of 1888 was doomed. The Captain turned westward, reached Vardoe in safety, and sent his crew home.

In the meantime the *Labrador* cruised about in search of her missing companion. Finding no signs of her in the neighbourhood of Kologueve Island, she headed for the Yugor, or Pet Straits, meeting with a large quantity of drift-ice on her way. At this second appointed meeting-place she sought in vain for the *Seagull*. Here the *Labrador* anchored, on September 11, for the Captain feared a disaster had happened to the frail craft amongst the ice, and half expected to see her crew arriving in their boats.

The place of anchorage was near a little settlement, named Nikolovski—also called Khabarova—consisting of a few huts, a tiny church, and a large storehouse, all built by M. Sibiriakoff. He used the storehouse as a depot for his merchandise, coming to and from the Obi. The *Labrador's* detention proved a God-send to some twenty Norwegians, whose little whaling vessels had been crushed by the ice. They took to their boats, and reached land safely. They now found refuge on the *Labrador*, and were ultimately carried home to Norway.

Mr Sewell embraced the opportunity of exploring the coast in search of flora, and his fine collection of specimens was afterwards presented

to the Herbarium of the Royal Botanical Garden, Edinburgh. He was much interested in the Samoyedes, and stated, in a lecture delivered at Dundee and Aberdeen in 1889, that “the men had an oily joviality about them. Though small of stature, they looked a strong race of hunters. The women were evidently more phlegmatic, and were seen sewing pieces of reindeer skin together into the picturesque and comfortable garments needed for the winter, or engaged as the hewers of wood and drawers of water. The curious tents, covered in winter with reindeer skin, or in summer with birch bark, are picturesque in the extreme, though dark and dismal in their interiors.” Mr Sewell made excellent use of his camera, as some of the illustrations in this book testify.

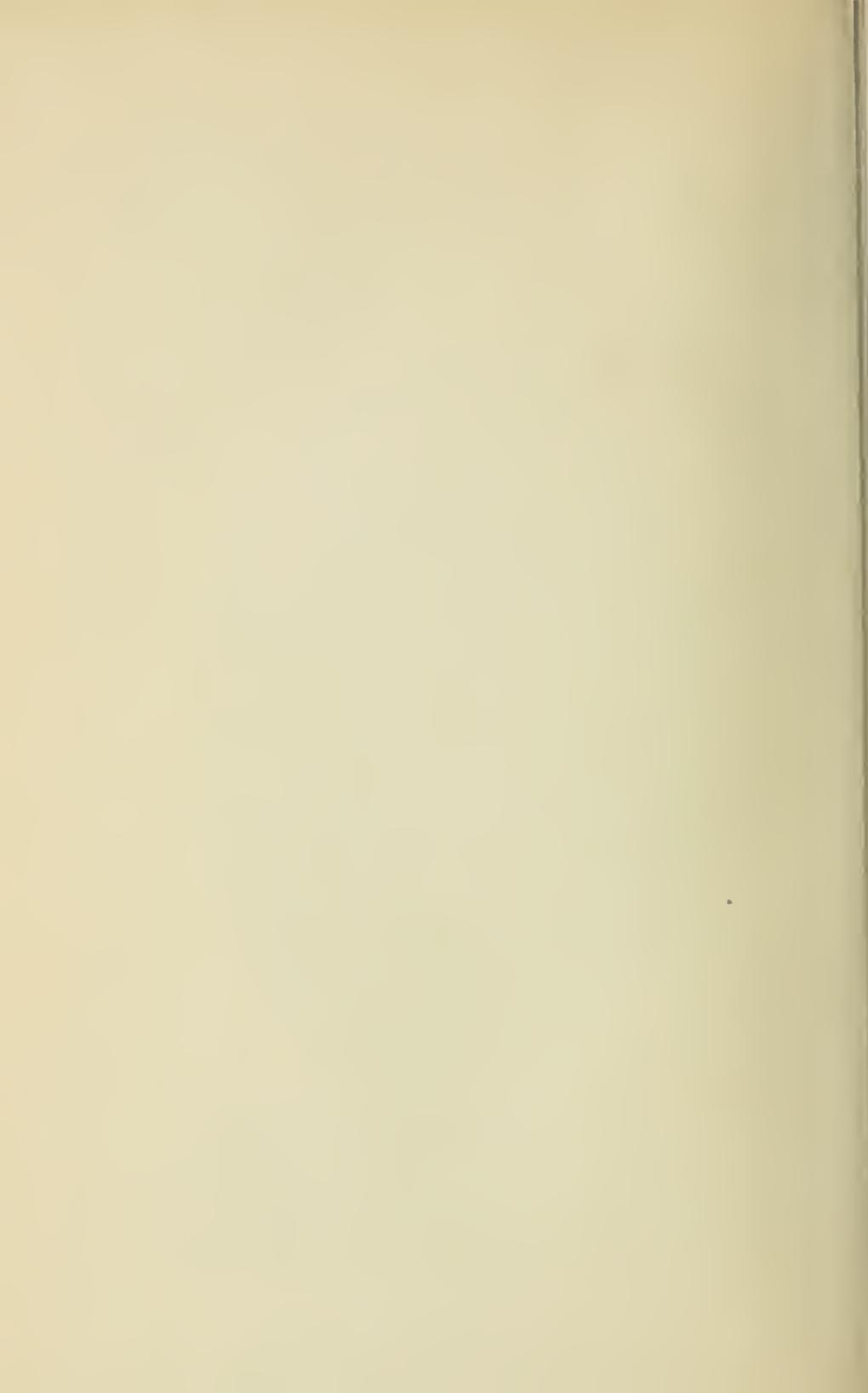
On September 25 a small steamer arrived from Vardoe, bringing the news that the *Seagull* had reached that port, all well. Captain Wiggins now fully realised that, owing to the failure of both the *Phoenix* and the *Seagull*, he must return to England with his cargo. But the Kara Sea was before him ; he had only to slip through the Yugor Straits to get there. The temptation to demonstrate yet once more that the Sea was navigable was too strong to resist ; so he decided to get under weigh and go forward.

But before proceeding he had to lose one of his passengers. Mr Victor Morier, disappointed that the voyage was broken, determined to see something of Siberia before returning to St. Petersburg.



SAMOYEDE WOMAN.

[To face p. 240.]



He induced three Samoyede families, encamped near the village of Khabarova, and about to start for their winter quarters on the Petchora, to change their destination and go with him on sledges as far as Obdorsk, on the Obi, a distance of about 600 miles. He also persuaded Mr Crowther, the mate of the *Labrador*, and one of the crew, a pardoned exile, to accompany him.

The journey which he proposed had never been accomplished by any Western European. The large party set off, with all their belongings, including three hundred head of reindeer, skirted the northernmost spur of the Urals, crossed the Yalmal isthmus, and reached Obdorsk in safety. After a short rest, Mr Morier resumed his sledge journey, travelling along the valley of the Obi as far as Tiumen, where he took train for St. Petersburg. A full account of this exploit, from Mr Morier's pen, was published in *Murray's Magazine* for August 1889.

When Captain Wiggins reached the Kara Sea he found a wide, open channel between the Samoyede coast and the ice. Proceeding towards White Island, he found the water entirely free of ice, and could have gone on without difficulty to the mouth of the Yenesei. On October 1 he turned homewards, and, on reaching Vardoe, heard tantalising news. The *Phœnix* had been got off easily from the sandbank upon which she stranded; she had proceeded down the Yenesei to Golchika, and had waited there until the approaching winter

season compelled her to return to Yeneseisk, which she reached without accident, much to the credit of her commander, Captain Robert Wiggins.

On Captain Wiggins' arrival in the Tyne, towards the end of October, he found many letters of sympathy from attached friends awaiting him. Amongst them was one from Sir Robert Morier. "I most sincerely sympathise with you in your disappointment," he wrote, "which is equally a very grievous one to me. I have no wish, because I think it would lead to no good, to enter into a discussion of the causes of the failure. . . . There is no use to cry over spilt milk, but there is great use in resolutely looking into the future and putting all our shoulders together to make success next year certain." After expressing satisfaction with the measures taken by the Captain to guard against risk in the overland journey of his son, Sir Robert concludes by bidding the Captain not to be disheartened. "We will make an excellent start next year if you come to St. Petersburg to help me, and, if necessary, go on to Yeneseisk and Irkutsk, and settle matters there yourself."

It is clear that, even at the beginning of 1889, the sting of failure still rankled, and the Captain was half inclined to withdraw from the Siberian work, leaving others to prosecute the enterprise of which he was the pioneer. "I see you are losing courage," Sir Robert Morier wrote on January 14, "and getting overwhelmed by the

undoubtedly very great difficulties with which our undertaking is surrounded. Now, I cannot tell you how deeply I sympathise with you, and how I understand your phrase that ‘these things make me cry out with pain’; but, remember, you have got a sound friend in me—that my whole heart is in the enterprise, and that it will take a great deal to beat me. . . . And now, my dear friend, cultivate patience, and, knowing that you are a God-fearing man, I bid you trust in God. Even in this bad world an honest endeavour to carry out a noble object bears fruit.”

Sir Robert’s exhortations had their desired effect, for the Captain braced himself for the task of finding an “open channel” amid the ice-floes of difficulty by which he was surrounded. He worked in every legitimate way, encouraged and advised by his “true and steadfast friend” at St. Petersburg, to advance the great cause, in the interests of which he was still ready to devote the rest of his life. It is needless to enter into all the difficulties of the moment; a bare indication of them will suffice.

The *Phœnix* Company succumbed to its heavy losses and went into liquidation. A new concern, named the Anglo-Siberian Syndicate, Limited, with its headquarters in London instead of in Newcastle, took over its liabilities and assets, almost the only asset being the ship *Phœnix*, which was lying at Yeneseisk, with Robert Wiggins in charge, and the crew clammering for their wages.

The transference of the management of the enterprise to the Syndicate was not accomplished without considerable friction and working at cross-purposes. Supporters in the North and those in London held certain views about a new company and its arrangements which did not harmonise with views and opinions urgently advocated by Sir Robert Morier; whilst Wiggins himself had strong views of his own, shared by some of his friends and opposed by others. With these conflicting elements around him, Wiggins was placed in an awkward and painful position. He was most anxious to defer to Sir Robert's judgment, but he felt, at the same time, that the wishes and suggestions of other supporters—practical men of business—had a strong claim to consideration.

On one subject, amongst others, he determined to be entirely guided by Sir Robert. He wished to be appointed a director of the Syndicate, and for two reasons—that he might have some control in the choice of ships, and obtain additional prestige in the eyes of the Russian Government, with the object of helping forward the Siberian work. Sir Robert reminded him that, as he was “hard up,” he would probably have to borrow money—a most undesirable step to take—in order to qualify himself for a directorship; and, moreover, he showed him conclusively that a directorship was irreconcilable with the post of “executive hand” of the Syndicate, as much so as the post of a general in

command of an army with that of a Minister of War. He added, about the question of prestige, “Your *name* is all, and more than all, that is wanted. Joseph Wiggins is an historical character, and your name, and not your title, will everywhere command respect, admiration, and attention.”

The Captain accepted Sir Robert’s advice, and also wisely determined to have nothing to do with the formation of the Company, or with its commercial and financial arrangements. He consented to serve, for twelve months, as master of any vessel which the Company might decide to send out.

Whilst the Syndicate was in process of formation, and Mr Sullivan and others were busy seeking support for the new undertaking, the Captain did his part to draw attention to the importance of establishing a trade route with Siberia through the Kara Sea. He lectured in London and in various provincial towns, and, on April 30, read a paper on “The Northern Waterway” before a distinguished audience in the rooms of the Society of Arts. After relating the story of his voyages to Siberia, he emphasised the object which he had in view, namely, the extension and strengthening of commercial relations with Russia, and drew attention to the mission of commerce in promoting and fostering international peace. “The brightest side of commerce is the fact that it travels hand in hand with peace. What is it that makes this England of ours so essentially a peacemaker? Is it that we have less of the fighting spirit in us? Our

history answers that question for us. Or is it that we have loftier principles than our neighbours? I think even we Englishmen must admit that others may have reached to our standard of perfection. The only answer to these important questions is the fact that so large a part of the intelligence, the vigour, and the perseverance of our great nation is engaged in commerce. We build ships, fit them out, fill them with our manufactured goods, send them to open out new regions, to find fresh markets, bringing back to us the products of other men's industry. Millions of toilers in our great hives of industry are day by day forging links in the great chain which is to bind nation to nation and race to race. And if only those of us who require to work for our daily bread could realise this fact in all its significance, our meanest task would become sublime in our eyes. No treaty of commerce, or diplomatic arrangement, can bind so closely as mutual interests in a common cause.

"Now, undoubtedly, owing to reasons geographical and historical, a great portion of public opinion in England and Russia regards these two countries as natural rivals, whose rivalry must some day or other lead to drawn swords. This idea I repudiate, and those who hold this opinion will perhaps bear with me if I speak a little from my own experience."

The Captain then went on to describe the hospitality, kindness, and consideration which he had received on every occasion of his visits to

Russia. "Thus it will be seen," he continued, "that my own experience makes it difficult to share the feeling of those who regard Russia in any other light than that of a friend; and I confess my inability to sympathise with those who suffer their prejudices and fears to warp their judgment to such an extent as to give rise to unnecessary panic—for it is easy in the times of panic to 'let slip the dogs of war. . . .'

"We must disabuse our minds of preconceived ideas, and keep our judgment unbiassed by pride, passion, or prejudice; then the great tyrant, War, will call to us in vain, and the peaceful voice of Commerce will surely find a willing ear. Let us listen to its teaching as it fell from the lips of one of our greatest living statesmen:—'The ships which travel between this land and that are like the shuttle of the loom, that is weaving a web of concord between the nations.' Surely, we would all like to take some part in keeping this shuttle flying, by furthering every effort in the direction of peaceful commerce, thus adding a thread of our own to this grand and beautiful web.

"Speaking on behalf of our Company, which is formed for the purpose of trading with Siberia by sea, I wish to point out that in this higher aspect our small venture is not without its significance, and, should our good vessel once more sail those seas, she will again carry with her what is dearer to my heart than any other token of the kind—excepting only our national flag—viz., the flag

of the British and Foreign Sailors' Society, the emblem of which is—not the dark angel of death with brooding pinion—but a pure white dove on buoyant wing, carrying with it on its flight the olive branch of peace; and so even the *Labrador* will 'take a text,' and preach a sermon from the sweetest words that ever were said or sung—'Peace on earth and goodwill towards men.'"

The *Pall Mall Gazette* states that the Captain was accorded an enthusiastic reception, and speaks of the deep interest excited by the exhibition of lantern slides, after the reading of the paper, showing strange scenes, peoples, and animals of the far-away land of exiles. "Captain Wiggins," quoting the same journal, "if he will permit us to say it, is an excellent showman, clear and concise in description, and full of quaint, pithy sayings and humorous remarks. A map of the Eastern Hemisphere (on which the course of the *Labrador* and the new route to Siberia were traced) evoked a heavy fire of questions—some intelligent and pertinent, others uncalled for, and wide of the mark. The Duke of Westminster exhibited great curiosity as to the ultimate fate of the *Phœnix*."

Captain Wiggins figured as one of the "lions" of the season of 1889. He was received by the Prince and Princess of Wales at Marlborough House, and afterwards attended a garden-party, given by the Prince, to meet Queen Victoria. The Duke of Westminster, the Marquess of Ormonde, Lord Wynford, Madame Novikoff, and

many other distinguished people, welcomed him to their houses to hear from his lips particulars of his work, his adventures, and aims. As the time drew near for another voyage, select parties of fashionable folks journeyed down to St Katharine's Docks to inspect the *Labrador*, and to see the Captain "at home." The newspapers talked about him, in leading articles, special articles, and "interviews." Even the Siberian dogs, which the Prince of Wales had accepted, seemed to reflect the mariner's fame in the Press and West End circles; whilst, at the same time, they created curiosity, consternation, jealousy, and profound antipathy in the kennels at Sandringham.

All this publicity was scarcely to the "humble mariner's" liking, but he regarded it as contributing to the final success of his projects in Siberian waters. He would much have preferred going to work quietly, leaving the world to wake up some day to find the ocean trading route permanently established.

When the summer was close at hand, the Syndicate had not succeeded in completing its arrangements. Wiggins got impatient, and began to think that he might do better for the great cause without a company at his back. Sir Robert Morier—who, it should be remembered, as a public officer of the Crown, could not invest in the Company—was still working hard on behalf of "a great historical scheme," as he termed the Siberian project, and on behalf of "a great

historical man"—on getting an inkling of the Captain's mood, used many a weighty argument in urging him to remain steadfast to the new organisation. He told him he was indispensable to the scheme, because he had "the key of the Kara Sea in his pocket," and that he (Sir Robert) believed in the enterprise because he believed in him. These arguments could not have carried much weight with the Captain, for he had said on more than one occasion, and he continued to say in later years, that any careful navigator with some experience in battling with ice, could easily conduct a ship through the Kara Sea to the Obi or the Yenesei. However, trying to repress impatience, he waited until the Syndicate had a ship ready for him.

At last the *Labrador* was chartered for her second voyage, and rapidly loaded with a costly cargo. In a few days she was ready for sea, and she left London on August 5. After a fine passage, and meeting with no difficulties from ice, she arrived at Golchika, at the mouth of the Yenesei, on September 4.

According to the Captain's verbal instructions, he was to anchor at Golchika, tranship his cargo into a small steamer, which was to be sent from Yeneseisk, arriving at Golchika on September 1, and take home a cargo which the steamer would bring. The steamer did not reach the port, and Captain Wiggins, after waiting until September 16, returned home without getting into touch with

her. He had discharged a portion of his cargo at Golchika, placing it in a store-house, for conveyance up the river during the following season.

This fiasco was the result of misunderstanding and mismanagement. Some 200 miles from Golchika, up the river, was a place called Karaoul, where the Russian Government had decided that cargoes were to be exchanged. A shallow-draught steamer, with a cargo for the *Labrador*, arrived here from Yeneseisk. This river expedition was under the direction of a Mr Lee, who had been appointed by the London Syndicate to represent them on the Yenesei. Captain Robert Wiggins was on board, but not in command. Mr Lee had arranged for an old steam-launch, lying at Karaoul, to be sent to Golchika, as soon as the expedition reached the former place. But the pilot refused to go down in the launch. Robert Wiggins and some of the crew volunteered to set off in her, but the proposal was not accepted. He then offered to take the steamer herself to Golchika, but her Captain, adhering strictly to the terms of his contract, and, intimidated by a strong wind which was blowing, would not allow the boat to go an inch further than Karaoul. The splendid steam-launch presented to the Phoenix Company by Mr Gardiner was left at Yeneseisk, and it is inexplicable why she was not carried with the steamer, for the purpose of communicating with Golchika. It is evident, moreover, that Mr Lee's instructions were confusing and

contradictory, leaving him in doubt as to the best course to adopt.

Returning to Captain Wiggins, it is easy to see, in his case also, that he was the victim of bungling and mismanagement. His verbal instructions were, as already stated, to go to Golchika, and tranship his cargo into a steamer which would be awaiting him there, or would reach the port soon after his arrival. Now comes what may be termed "The Comedy of a Linen Parcel." On his way down the river Thames, some Russian money, sewn up securely in linen, was placed in his hands for the purpose of paying expenses at Golchika. He locked up the packet in a drawer in his cabin, and thought no more about it until he wanted the money at Golchika, on the point of his departure, to pay for about a ton of flour which he intended to take home. On opening the parcel, he was surprised to find a letter, as well as money. The letter advised, or instructed him, to go on to Karaoul, or towards that place, in the event of no steamer turning up at Golchika.

Had the Captain known of the existence and the contents of the letter when the packet was handed to him, he would have stopped the ship in order to assure his employers—an assurance which they ought not to have needed—that it was quite impossible to take the *Labrador*, which drew sixteen feet of water, further up the river than Golchika without the certain prospect of her being

wrecked. When he opened the letter it was too late to attempt any measures to communicate with Karaoul, for some natives who had arrived from that place brought the news that the steamer had returned to Yeneseisk.

The Captain was asked, on reaching home, why he had not tried to send a message to Karaoul when he found no steamer or steam launch awaiting him at Golchika. His answer ought to have been satisfactory to every one inclined to blame him for the "*Labrador* fiasco." For some days the non-arrival of the steamer created—in the face of his instructions—no anxiety, being aware of the delays which might easily have occurred on her journey down the river. When he did begin to feel anxious, he had to consider that there was no practicable and safe means of sending to Karaoul. He had no steam-launch, and to send one of the *Labrador's* boats up the river, against a swift current and a strong southerly wind, spelt disaster. Moreover, his small crew were fully employed in preparing the cargo for transhipment, and in the midst of this work the ship dragged her anchors in a gale, and got fixed on a bank.<sup>1</sup> This little mishap involved a large amount of additional labour, day

<sup>1</sup> The Captain afterwards accounted for the failure of anchorage from the fact of the muddy bottom of the river being only a surface-covering of a bank of ice, a fact which could not possibly be found out or demonstrated until the anchors, one after the other, had slid home. "The lesson to be learned," added the Captain, "was to anchor further out in mid-stream, where the bottom is probably not frozen, say a quarter of a mile, or still further, from the shore." The Captain had kept as close as possible to the shore—consistently with safety, as he thought—in order to lessen the arduous duties of his crew.

and night, in shifting the cargo, and taking a quantity on shore in the ship's boats. This work occupied seven days; on the seventh day the ship floated. Apart from the risk of sending up the river, had the Captain told off a number of his crew for manning a boat for Karaoul, the reduction of his helpers would have imperilled the safety of the *Labrador*.

Sir Robert Morier thought that the Captain ought to have used "every means in his power, at whatever risk," to get into touch with Karaoul. When Sir Robert wrote those words he was labouring, very naturally, under intense chagrin—perhaps too intense to be fully realised by others, except those holding high positions similar to the position which he held. For some three years he had laboured, with enthusiasm almost equal to that shown by Wiggins, to promote the success of the Siberian scheme. The Russian Court, the English Court, his distinguished circle of friends, and all who had recognised his great abilities as an ambassador, had followed his support of Wiggins and his advocacy of the Captain's projects with keen interest, and were waiting, in various moods, to see the results of his eloquent advocacy. And now it probably seemed to him that he might become the subject of private ridicule for pinning his faith to a scheme which, to some, had appeared impracticable, if not fantastic. Sir Robert may be excused if, in the extreme disappointment and irritation of the moment, he failed to apprehend all the circum-

stances of difficulty and responsibility in which Wiggins was placed; but he certainly did not mean all that Wiggins inferred in using the term "at whatever risk."

The Captain assured Sir Robert that it had been his aim to devote himself and his services, to the best of his ability, to his wishes, without in any way considering his own personal cost. "But I did not think it was to be done," he writes, "'at whatever risk.' That might mean the ruin of the cause which you have so generously espoused. Besides my loyalty to yourself, I must consider my own overpowering sense of what will best serve the cause. Then there are my moral obligation to the Syndicate, my legal duty to my owners, my responsibility to the merchants who own the cargo, and my accountability to the Board of Trade, to whose penalties I am liable, in the event of accidents occurring through running unwarrantable risks."

The fact is, Captain Wiggins was saddled with too many masters in this business, and hence sprang misunderstanding, conflicting instructions, and muddle. We may safely assert that if the ocean and river arrangements had been entrusted entirely to the hands of Wiggins and his brother, this expedition of the *Labrador* would not have proved a lamentable failure.

## CHAPTER XIII

### BIDING HIS TIME

Welcome to the Captain after defeat—A question of ways and means—Earl Grey on the Captain's qualities—Voyage to South America—Expedition of the *Biscaya*, the *Thule*, and the *Bard*—The pioneer's assertions verified—Voyage to the Amazon—Death of Victor Morier—His appointments in South Africa—Death of Sir Robert Morier—Respect for his memory shown by the Czar—His warm feeling for Wiggins—A memento of “infinite kindness”—Mr F. W. Leyborne - Popham —The *Blencathra* and the *Minusinsk* —Miss Helen Peel decides to go to the Kara Sea—Mr F. G. Jackson —Commission from the Russian Government—Material for the Trans-Siberian Railway.

CAPTAIN WIGGINS reached the London Docks on October 16, the voyage from Golchika having taken just a month.

The hearty welcome which he received from old and trusty friends, as well as from influential circles into which he had been drawn in the early part of the year, was a source of deep gratification to him. The welcome accorded by these friends and acquaintances assured him that he was held free from blame for the *Labrador*

fiasco, whatever may have been the opinion of some of the speculators who had joined the Syndicate for the sole purpose of making money. Other members of the Syndicate—perhaps only a minority—shared in the Captain's higher aim—the “weaving of a web of concord” between England and Russia—and entirely exonerated him from blame. In their eyes fiasco, failure, and loss were not in the least surprising when the pioneering character of the work, with all its difficulties and uncertainties, was taken into consideration. They saw that a large amount of capital must inevitably be sunk before so great a scheme as the ocean route could be established, and that the ultimate aim in view was well worth such sacrifice.

So enthusiastic were some of the Captain's wealthy friends, who admired the man, and heartily approved of his aims, that it seemed probable another company might have been formed easily, to enable him to renew the prosecution of his enterprise, had he but expressed a wish in that direction. But his keen sense of honour and duty deterred him from encouraging a new effort, for it would certainly have come into rivalry with the existing, though impoverished, Company to which he felt he was morally, yet not legally, bound.

The condition of the Kara Sea of course would not permit the Syndicate to despatch another expedition until the following summer. In the

meantime the Captain, having no funds to fall back upon, had to consider how he was to get his daily bread. The Syndicate stated that they would be glad to avail themselves of his services should they arrange for another voyage, but their finances would not allow them to pay him a retaining fee. That settled the question. The Captain must look elsewhere for subsistence. There is every probability that he might have gained a fair income for nine months by stumping the country—and America, too—lecturing, for he was one of the most entertaining and magnetising lecturers of the day. But such a way of earning a livelihood was not a congenial one, and it is questionable whether, by that means, he would have helped the cause which he still most earnestly desired to serve.

Many seafaring schemes were simmering in his mind when the owner of the *Labrador* offered him a voyage in this ship to South America, and the offer was at once accepted. The Captain hoped to return in time to take command of the Syndicate's expedition in the summer of 1890, but was unable to pledge his services. Before leaving England he had to deliver several lectures, one of them before the Tyne Geographical Society in the Northumberland Hall, Newcastle. Earl Percy presided, and at the close of the lecture Mr Albert Grey (now Earl Grey), in moving a vote of thanks, said that Captain Wiggins was made of the same stuff that the men

who had built up England were made of. Conceiving a great idea, he had the pluck, in spite of every sort of difficulty, to keep pegging away until he realised that idea. He had done in this generation what Christopher Columbus did three hundred years ago ; and it only remained for capital to come to his aid, to enable him to lay the foundation of a great beneficial intercourse with the continent of Siberia.

We need not follow Captain Wiggins on his voyage to the tropics—in singular contrast with his journeys to the regions of ice. He was heartily glad to be free from the “constant fretting and worry and anxiety of all the conflicting circumstances that attend the Syndicate’s efforts,” and “could not indulge other feelings than intense regret that affairs connected with so grand a work were so wretchedly muddled up, and such heavy losses consequently accrued.” “For Sir Robert Morier,” he wrote in another letter, “I would have stayed ashore even if I had starved to do so. After the treatment of the present Syndicate, I do not feel the slightest interest on their behalf. They lost faith in me, and I in them.” “And yet,” he adds, “my only desire is that the good work may progress, no matter who does it.” He then refers to the attitude of one of his supporters—“the truest man he had ever known”—who, indignant at the treatment of Wiggins, had offered to pay a considerable sum to qualify him for a seat on the Board.

The Captain had intended to be back in England again in four or five months, but the voyage was considerably prolonged, owing partly to the *Labrador* having to lay up for repairs. From South America he took the ship to the Cape, and had the satisfaction of making this long voyage profitable for his owner. He left England in January 1890, and did not return until the beginning of 1891.

During his absence a notable success was achieved. Mr Albert Grey and Mr John D. Milburn, of Newcastle, came to the relief of the Syndicate. They formed a small committee, under the title of "Local Committee for the North of England." Subscriptions were invited from private persons, and a large sum was raised for another expedition. Two ships of light draught, the *Biscaya* and the *Thule*, with valuable cargoes, and a powerful tug, the *Bard*, were despatched from London. Mr Julius M. Price accompanied the expedition as special artist for the *Illustrated London News*. The vessels reached Karaoul safely, and transhipped their cargoes into the river steamers, whilst the *Bard* was handed over to the agent of the Syndicate, for use on the Yenesei. The river craft returned to Yeneseisk, where the goods from England were landed and warehoused. Unhappily, during the passage up the Yenesei, Mr Lee, the Syndicate's agent, fell overboard and was drowned. The *Biscaya* and the *Thule*, loaded with Siberian produce, returned to London without accident.

Although Captain Wiggins, through his detention in the tropics, was robbed of the laurels which were rightly his, it was a satisfaction to him that his brother Robert commanded the tug, and a former mate of the *Labrador*, Mr Cordiner, had charge of the *Thule*, whilst another former mate of the *Labrador*, John Crowther, was ice-master on board the *Biscaya*.

The *Spectator*, in an article on this successful expedition, remarked : "That Fate, with the smile of irony on her face, who presides over explorers and inventors, has refused the opening-up of Siberia by sea to the man who has spent his life in trying to get a deaf world to understand that a waterway exists into the heart of Northern Asia if seamen would only use it. Instead of Captain Wiggins being the first man to effect the junction between the sea-going ships and a steam flotilla on the Yenesei River, it has fallen to the lot of another navigator. . . . It is almost impossible to overestimate the geographical and commercial significance of the news that the English ships belonging to the Syndicate, started by Mr Albert Grey and Mr Milburn, sailed from London to Karaoul—a port 160 miles up the Yenesei, where they discharged their cargoes into the river flotilla—in thirty-nine days. . . .

"Captain Wiggins, no doubt, will take a large share in the future development of the traffic between England and the Siberian river. Nevertheless, the fact remains, that at the moment when

it was most fitting that he should have been present, the irony of circumstance operated to rob him of his due. He has been forced to watch as a spectator an act which would never have been accomplished but for him. It is as if Stephenson, for some reason, had been obliged to mingle in the crowd while a more fortunate man inaugurated the first railway in England."

But the Captain's enforced exclusion from this prosperous venture was not the gall and wormwood to him that some people imagined. He had solved the Kara Sea problem, and if others reaped the fruit, he could only feel gratified that his assertion—that the Sea could be navigated by any skilful seaman who had some knowledge of the vagaries of ice—was proved correct.

The years 1891 and 1892 were barren as regards the prosecution of the ocean route enterprise to Siberia. The Captain spent most of this period on shore, but towards the close of 1891 he took a little ship, of about six tons, to the Amazon for the Brazilian Government. In 1892 he deeply regretted to hear of the death of his "Boy," Victor Morier. After his broken voyage in the *Labrador*, and his adventurous sledge journey, the young man enlisted in the South Africa Chartered Company's Police Force, when his knowledge of Portuguese proved of great service to the Company. A little later he was appointed Assistant Civil Commissioner to the Anglo-Portuguese Delimitation Commission, and on his journey to

begin his duties in Manicaland succumbed to an attack of fever.

His father, Sir Robert Morier, died in the following year, partly the result of strenuous devotion to his work at St Petersburg—the climate of which undermined his constitution—and partly from grief at the loss of his only son. His death deprived England of one of her most sagacious diplomatists, and of one of her most popular and successful Ambassadors to Russia. It is worth remembering that, had it not been for his influence with the Czar and his Ministers, Russia and England would probably have been plunged into war in 1885.

The Russian Government, in compliance with instructions given by Alexander III., shortly before his death, testified its respect for Sir Robert's memory by sending a cross to be erected over his grave in Northwood churchyard. The cross was made of Siberian jasper, for the purpose of commemorating the Ambassador's energetic efforts to open up Siberia to British commerce by the ocean route through the agency of Captain Wiggins and others.

With regard to Sir Robert's relations with Wiggins, the failure of the *Labrador*, in 1889, to accomplish her task rankled in Sir Robert's memory for a long time. He feared that it would certainly cast a reflection upon his reputation both in Russia and in England, because of his persistent support of the Captain's scheme. But in the closing

months of his life his judgment of that unfortunate affair underwent a change ; he was ready to exonerate the Captain from blame, and he entertained for him the same warm feelings which his early intercourse with him had awakened. A touching proof of his abiding regard, in spite of conflicting views on the *Labrador* question, is in existence. A few months after the death of his son he sent a portrait of the young man to the Captain, on which he wrote—"Presented to Captain Wiggins, in remembrance of his infinite kindness, and tender care of my boy on board the *Labrador*, by R. B. Morier.—Batchworth Heath, September 5, 1892."

In January, 1893, at the close of an address by Dr Nansen before the Royal Geographical Society, on "How can the North Pole be reached?" Wiggins made an interesting speech on the route chosen by Nansen for his approaching cruise, and on the possibility of raising a ship on to the ice, instead of allowing it to be frozen in.

That year was memorable for one of the most successful of Wiggins' voyages to the Kara Sea and the Yenesei. Mr F. W. Leyborne-Popham, an enthusiastic yachtsman, desired to make a sporting and exploring voyage to the Arctic Seas in his steam-yacht, the *Blencathra*, about 400 tons burden, but afterwards decided to combine business with pleasure, and take advantage of the opening of the Yenesei to commerce. In February he entered into negotiations with Captain Wiggins,

with the result that a private syndicate was formed, in which Mr Leyborne-Popham held the chief pecuniary interest. The Captain undertook, for a stated remuneration and a small share of profits, to select suitable ships and cargoes, conduct the vessels to Siberia, and keep himself in touch with the Russian Government and Siberian officials and merchants, in order to secure the development of trade for the benefit of the syndicate.

The *Blencathra* was originally the gunboat *Newport*. She became the property of Sir Allen Young, who renamed her the *Pandora* and used her for Arctic work. When bought by Mr Leyborne-Popham, she was greatly strengthened at Appledore, Devon, and fitted with an ice-ram. A shallow-draught steamer, named the *Minusinsk*—after an important town on the Yenesei—was also bought, to proceed up the river with gold-mining machinery and other goods.

The *Blencathra* was to carry four passengers—Mr Leyborne-Popham, Miss Peel—one of the daughters of the late Sir Robert Peel—and Mr and Mrs E. C. F. James. “Youth, and love of adventure,” writes Miss Peel in her account of the voyage—“Polar Gleams”—“inspired me with a longing for new experiences, regardless of unforeseen perils and private warnings.” She longed to be the first of her sex “to sail through the icebergs of the Kara Sea, up the mighty Yenesei River.”

Mr Frederick G. Jackson intended sailing in

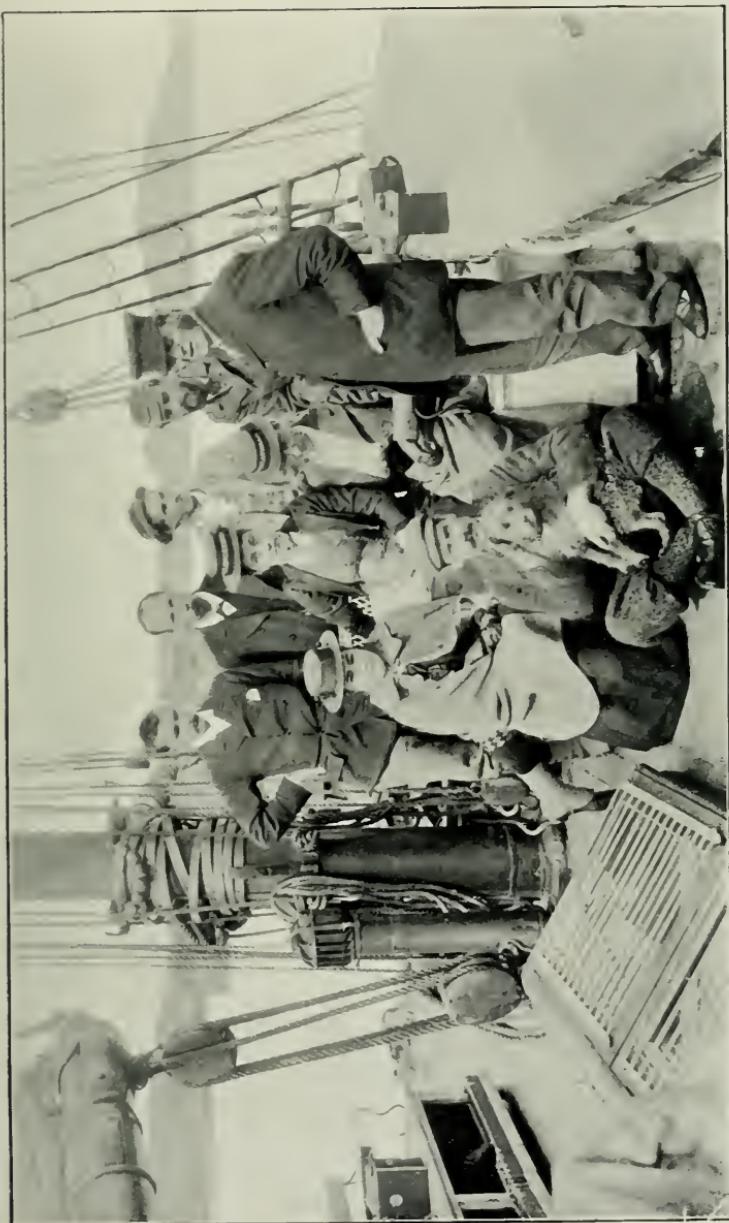
the *Blencathra* as far as the Yugor, or Pet Straits, thence returning homeward by sledge. His object was to gain experience, in view of his projected Arctic expedition of 1894. Nansen, who was to leave Europe in advance of the *Blencathra* on his Polar cruise in the *Fram*, hoped to leave despatches at St. Nicolai (Khabarova) at the Yugor Straits, which Wiggins undertook to call for and carry home.

In June, when arrangements were nearly completed, the unexpected happened, and forced a change of programme. The Russian Government, thoroughly roused at last to the importance and the convenience of the ocean route to the Czar's Siberian dominions, requested Wiggins to convey a cargo of rails—the first instalment of material for the Trans-Siberian Railway. “To carry rails half round the world to Vladivostok, and then overland into the interior,” said the Captain to an interviewer, “was obviously absurd, when there was a splendid water-way from the north, navigable right up to the centre of the projected railroad. One day they wired me from St. Petersburg: ‘Can you bring 2,000 tons of rails up the Yenesei to Krasnoiarsk?’ I wired back: ‘Twenty thousand, if you like.’”

A large steamer, the *Orestes*, of 2,500 tons burden, was soon chartered, and taken to Middlesbrough to load the railway material. The Russian Volunteer Fleet Company had given orders to a firm at Dumbarton for the construction of a paddle steamer, a twin-screw steamer, and a strong barge,

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PARTY ON BOARD THE *BLEVIA*.





which were named the *Malyguine*, the *Offtzine*, and the *Scuratoff*. These vessels, for service on the Yenesei, were commanded by Russian officers, and manned by Russian sailors, and, with Lieutenant Dobrotvorsky in chief command, were to accompany the three English vessels. The *Blencathra* was to be commanded by Captain Brown, and the *Orestes* by Captain Wiggins, who was also pilot of the whole fleet. The six vessels were to meet at Vardoe, and to sail together to the mouth of the great river.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ANGLO-RUSSIAN EXPEDITION

Sailing of the *Orestes*, the *Blencathra*, the *Minusinsk*, and three Russian vessels—The Samoyedes of Khabarova—Miss Peel's sledging experiences—The “great Ice-Cellar” like the Lake of Geneva—Recreations of the pleasure party—Rejoicings at Golchika—Transhipment of rails—Return of the pleasure - party — Miss Peel's impressions of her trip—Wiggins goes up the Yenesei once more — Excitement at Yeneseisk — Thanksgiving Service in the Cathedral—Banqueting—Wiggins in St Petersburg — Causes of failures—Presentation of silver plate to the Captain by order of the Czar—The *Times* on the Presentation—Neglect of the British Government to support the Captain's projects — Presentation to Wiggins of the Murchison Grant — Speech at the Geographical Society's Dinner — The *Windward*—Another Commission from Russia.

THE *Blencathra* sailed from “the little white fishing village” of Appledore on July 25, 1893, and reached Vardoe on August 7, where the *Minusinsk* was awaiting her. A few hours later, Wiggins arrived in the *Orestes* from Middlesbrough—his ship loaded with 1,600 tons of rails—and the Russian contingent on August 17. At

a lively dinner-party on board the *Blencathra*, hearty congratulations were exchanged between the English and the Russian officers on the bright prospect of the development of commerce between the two nations. The diversions of the ladies during their fortnight's stay at Vardoe are fully described in Miss Peel's fascinating book.

On August 22 the Russian fleet, accompanied by the *Minusinsk*, left Norway, followed, the next day, by the *Orestes* and the *Blencathra*. Captain Wiggins gave the Russian officers explicit directions in writing, so that, in the event of fogs or gales separating the ships, they would know the best route to take.

The imposing fleet of six vessels—the most important expedition that had ever attempted to navigate the Kara Sea—reached the Yugor Straits without mishap, and anchored in the shelter of a creek in the island of Waigats. The organisation of the expedition seems to have been perfect. An Imperial Russian corvette had been sent from St. Petersburg to the Straits, to receive despatches from Lieutenant Dobrotvorsky, and to tranship stores to the Russian flotilla. Having fulfilled her mission, she returned to St. Petersburg.

On August 29 the whole fleet weighed anchor and set off, the *Orestes* and the *Blencathra* leading the way, for the 2,000 miles journey across the dreaded Kara Sea. Anchor was dropped for a few hours at St. Nicolai (Khabarova) to enable Mr Jackson to land, and to enquire for Dr

Nansen's despatches. It was found that the Arctic explorer had passed into the Kara Sea in the middle of August, but had left no despatches. He sent them home overland, as Captain Wiggins learned on returning to England.

Many of the Samoyedes—men, women, and children—put off in boats to greet their old friend, the English mariner. Clambering on to the *Orestes*, they clustered round the Captain, showing exuberant delight at the pleasure of seeing his face again. Miss Peel, who went ashore, made the acquaintance of some of the natives, and was persuaded to indulge in a rollicking, bumping sledge drive. To avoid being pitched from the sledge, she had to cling, she says, with both arms round the driver's neck. Not intimidated by this rough experience, the plucky lady yielded to the importunate entreaty of another prepossessing Russian to take a second drive. It was certainly a case, as Miss Peel wittily explains, of “admiration conquering fear.”

When the fleet entered the “great Ice-Cellar,” as the Kara Sea was termed by Von Baer, a few ice-floes were to be seen, but a wide, open space of clear water stretched far to the eastward. The fleet went ahead with full steam on. The sun shone in a cloudless sky, and so mild was the temperature that the passengers on the *Blencathra* slept with the port-holes of their cabins open. “Our navigation through the Kara Sea was perfectly delightful,”

writes the entertaining lady-chronicler. The water was so quiet that she could imagine she had been transferred to the Lake of Geneva. The lady describes her light summer attire, as well as the musical evenings on board the *Blencathra*, and a battle with walruses, led by the intrepid Mr Leyborne-Popham.

On rounding White Island, the Russian paddle-steamer was told off to survey the strait between the island and the northern extremity of the Yalmal Peninsula. Wiggins, on his previous voyages, had found the strait useless for navigation, owing to its swift currents, winding channels, and dangerous shoals, and his observations and conclusions were now verified by the commander of the *Malyguine*.

The remaining vessels steered for Thames Haven, an island of the Dickson Haven group, discovered and named by Wiggins in 1876. On September 2 the high mainlands to the north-east came in sight, and on the following day the fleet was steaming up the Yenesei Gulf—keeping a few miles from the shore—the smaller ships leading the way. Slow progress was compulsory, owing to the varying depths, and the lead was kept going constantly. On the evening of September 3—the moon shining brightly—the whole fleet dropped anchor off the little island-village of Golchika, amid the loud cheers of the crews, caught up and returned again and again by the crews of the river-craft, waiting at the port

for their cargoes. The firing of guns and of rockets, and a display of Bengal lights helped to celebrate an event long to be remembered in the island.

For the first time in history, Russian steamers had crossed the Kara Sea and entered the mouth of the Yenesei. For the first time it was proved that a vessel as large as the *Orestes*, of 2,500 tons, could reach Golchika safely ; whilst it was shown, for the enlightenment of lovers of yachting, that ladies might safely indulge in an enjoyable and invigorating summer trip across the Kara Sea.

Nineteen years had passed since Captain Wiggins ventured on his pioneer voyage, and demonstrated the inaccuracy of Admiral Lutke's pessimistic conclusions. At last Russia had made up her mind to utilise the Captain's observations and discoveries. With a well-arranged Government enterprise, she had proved that his proposals and efforts were not the mere "dreams and phantasies" of an over-sanguine and impulsive nature. Wiggins had prophesied that many years must pass before the advantages of the sea-route would be realised and practically appreciated by Russia. That time seemed to have come. The indomitable Captain's unwearying efforts were bearing the fruit which he had so long desired to see. The successes of previous voyages, organised by private persons, were but the promise of what could be done by efficient Government enterprise, and now it only remained for Russia to continue the task which she had begun.

Although the 1,600 tons of rail and many tons of miscellaneous goods had been safely carried to Golchika, they had yet to be carried up the river—1,800 miles—to Yeneseisk. The work of transhipment to the river barges and steamers called forth the energies of the various crews, and of a number of exiles, brought down the river to help. Operations were delayed again and again by severe gales, and two of the Siberian barges proved unequal to resist wind and waves, and broke asunder. They were allowed to drift ashore, to remain there until the following season, when the rails with which they were loaded would be unshipped. The *Blencathra* and two or three of the Russian steamers dragged their anchors, and had to take refuge on the western shore. On occasional fine days the pleasure party, led by Mr Leyborne-Popham, took the opportunity of landing, to explore the village, and inspect the natives, whose habits and curious customs are described by Miss Peel's ready pen. The gentlemen of the party usually had their guns with them, and managed to bag quantities of ptarmigan.

The transhipment of goods was completed, at least so far as it could be done, for, owing to an insufficient number of barges, about a thousand rails had to be taken in the *Orestes* to Archangel, in accordance with alternative instructions of the Russian Government. A proposal for the ladies, Mr Leyborne-Popham and Mr James, to accompany the steamers up the river caused “a

considerable ebullition of spirits," says Miss Peel. She looked forward to a wider insight into the life of the Siberians, and to the excitement of a sledge journey home from Yeneseisk. Greatly to her disappointment, the proposal fell through, and it was decided for the pleasure party to return by the way they had come.

Captain Wiggins decided to go up the river, to help in the pilotage of the Russian craft, and gave over the command of the *Orestes* to Captain Furneaux. The *Orestes* and the *Blencathra* weighed anchor on September 20 for the homeward voyage. In three weeks the temperature in the Kara Sea had undergone a considerable change, and Miss Peel noted in her diary twenty degrees of frost. Quantities of drift-ice were met with, and gales were frequent, but the two ships reached Archangel on September 30, all well. After a short stay at this place, they proceeded on their way, and arrived home without accident, concluding a voyage which, to Miss Peel at least —to quote her own words—"opened out a new sphere in my life, enlarged my mind, stimulated my enthusiasm for the beauties of nature—in short, I have reaped from it benefits that will never die."

The *Minusinsk*, now put under the command of Robert Wiggins, who had come down from Yeneseisk, was the first vessel to be despatched up the river. She carried valuable gold-mining machinery and other goods. In five days the

other steamers and barges started on their river journey, Captain Wiggins being on board the *Offtchine*.

The flotilla reached Yeneseisk on October 23. "Thousands of people," writes Wiggins, "lined the shore, and rent the air with their hearty cheers, which were answered by the tars on board our flotilla, and by the firing of signal guns." A large, shallow-draught steamer, the *Russia*, of Krasnoiarsk, gaily decorated, and with hundreds of passengers on board, came alongside the *Offtchine*. Lieutenant Dobrotvorsky was invited to meet the Governor, and other notables, on the *Russia's* deck. A letter of welcome was presented to him, as well as a large iced-cake, crowned by a silver salt-cellar. The national custom of partaking of salt having been complied with, the Lieutenant conducted the city magnates, including the Bishop, to the cabin of the *Offtchine*, whilst merchants and ladies and a troop of other people soon crowded the decks. Congratulations, cheering, and health-drinking followed, and then the visitors returned to the *Russia*, "leaving the mariners at leisure to realise the fact that, for the first time, a Russian fleet, flying the Imperial flag, had safely anchored in view of Siberian citizens."

The next day a thanksgiving service was held in the Cathedral, attended by the officers and their crews, and the citizens of Yeneseisk. A banquet was held in the evening, and illuminations blazed on the river promenade. A few days later

the celebrations came to an end with a grand ball at the mansion of one of the leading merchants.

Towards the end of November, Lieutenant Dobrotvorsky—afterwards promoted to the rank of Captain for his exertions on this memorable voyage from Britain—and his brother officers gave a farewell banquet and a ball to the ladies and gentlemen who had so heartily welcomed them. The Club House, engaged for the purpose, was artistically decorated in sailor fashion, whilst the ladies wore favours, with miniature anchors and sledge bells, which had been made by the seamen.

In Captain Wiggins' detailed and picturesque account of all these festivities he keeps himself in the background, making it appear that Lieutenant Dobrotvorsky was the sole recipient of the honours. As a matter of fact, the Captain was as much the hero of the hour as the gallant Russian officer; and the merchants were not slow to realise that, but for the prolonged efforts of the English mariner, no such expedition would have been originated and carried out.

The rails having been sent on to Krasnoiarsk, and the river-craft safely placed in winter quarters, Wiggins started for home by sledge on December 20. One incident of this winter journey deserves to be recorded, especially as it can be told in the Captain's picturesque language.

“The morning was bright and sunny, with intense frost, when, to our amazement, we suddenly

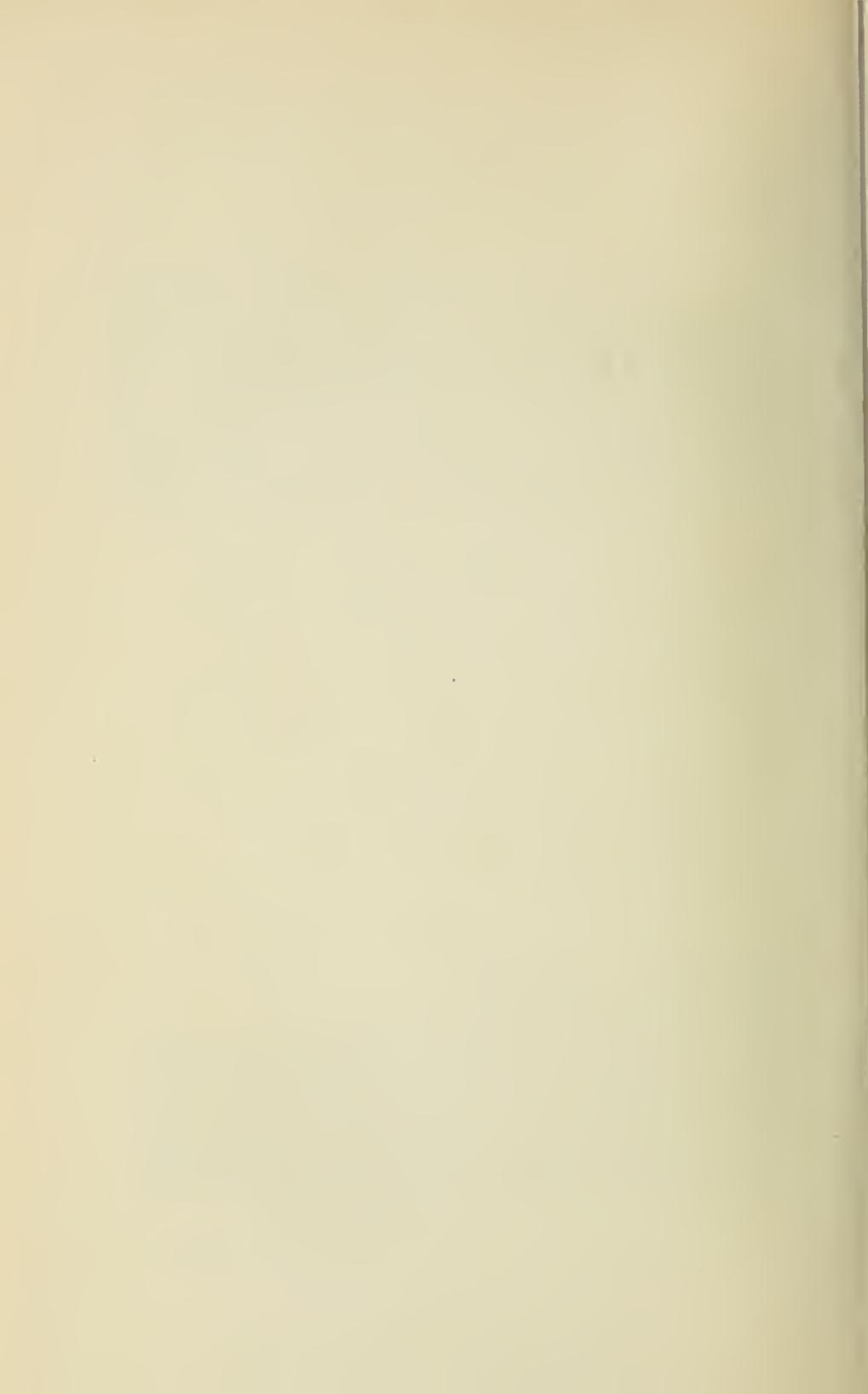


EKATERINBURG.  
(View from Czar's Bridge.)



LANDMARK DIVIDING EUROPEAN AND ASIATIC SIBERIA.

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overtook the most extraordinary caravan, or rather cavalcade, that it has ever been my lot to see. A large number of huge camels were drawing monster sledges laden with tons of massive machinery. An immense sack or cloak, made of thick hair-felt, enveloped each beast from stem to stern, coming down from the top of its unsightly hump to the lower part of its body, or the middle of its lanky legs. To see such animals, denizens of warm climates, quietly stalking along, their bare, soft feet all exposed to the sharp, cutting ice of those frozen roads, icicles pendent from their highly-elevated nostrils, was a curious sight indeed.

“ Each animal was attended by its quiet and quaint-looking Tartar leader, walking demurely by the side of the outlandish-looking animal, making a never-to-be-forgotten picture of patience and endurance. Surely no hot sands of the arid desert could ever produce the suffering and pain which these patient creatures were now called upon to endure; yet they were doing their work as quietly and unconcernedly as though in their own warm climate of the southern steppes. It was hard to decide which was the more deserving of praise—the patient, weird-looking Mongolian leader, or the ungainly brute that he led, which had drawn its heavy burden hundreds of miles. Passenger and mail posting are also carried on by the same primitive means, but most of this traffic is now confined to the bye-routes.”

The Captain reached St. Petersburg on January 22, 1894, and stayed there nearly a month. He was busy reporting the recent voyage to the Czar's Ministers, making preliminary arrangements for another expedition, and attempting to secure a cargo. Mr W. T. Stead happened to be in St. Petersburg, and interviewed the Captain at the Hotel d'Angleterre. He found him not looking much the worse for his arduous overland journey. "He looks nearer fifty than sixty-two, is bronzed and weather-beaten, and in every sense a thorough 'salt'—worthy to be compared with his Elizabethan predecessors." It was at Sir Robert Morier's suggestion that the Russian Government despatched the expedition which had now been completed so successfully. "I spoke to Sir Robert a few months before his death," said Mr Stead, "and learned from his own lips how much he had the success of the enterprise at heart, and he hoped the financial failures of previous English expeditions would be avoided." The news of the flotilla's arrival at Yeneseisk reached him about a fortnight before he passed away.

Replying to a question as to the causes of failure, the Captain said that the English Company did not see their way to follow his advice, which was, "not to pass by the local merchants, and not to carry on business with an eye solely to their own ends. Siberian merchants are not so ignorant as some people imagine. They are shrewd business men of great wealth; and as

soon as they realised the fact that the English Company intended to pass them by, and to monopolise the whole trade, they simply stood on one side and refused to do any serious business with it. Another cause of non-success was the ignorance and lack of judgment shown in choosing the goods for the Siberian market. The English Company did not send what the Siberians required, but what it thought would suit them. The result might have been foreseen, and was a great trouble to me."

The most interesting incident of this visit to St Petersburg was the presentation to the Captain, by order of the Emperor Alexander III., of a gift of solid silver plate, elaborately worked, and weighing nearly four hundred ounces. It consisted of a large punch-bowl, a salver, a ladle, and twenty-five mugs, each article being ornamented with an antique Russian design. An appropriate proverb, in ancient Slavonic characters, was inscribed on each mug, whilst the magnificent salver bore an inscription stating that the gift was an acknowledgment of services rendered to Russia. The following letter from the Marine Minister accompanied the gift:

“ST. PETERSBURG, January 21, 1894.

“To Captain J. Wiggins.

“SIR,—I have great pleasure in forwarding to you, with the authorisation of His Majesty, the Emperor, the accompanying box, which I beg

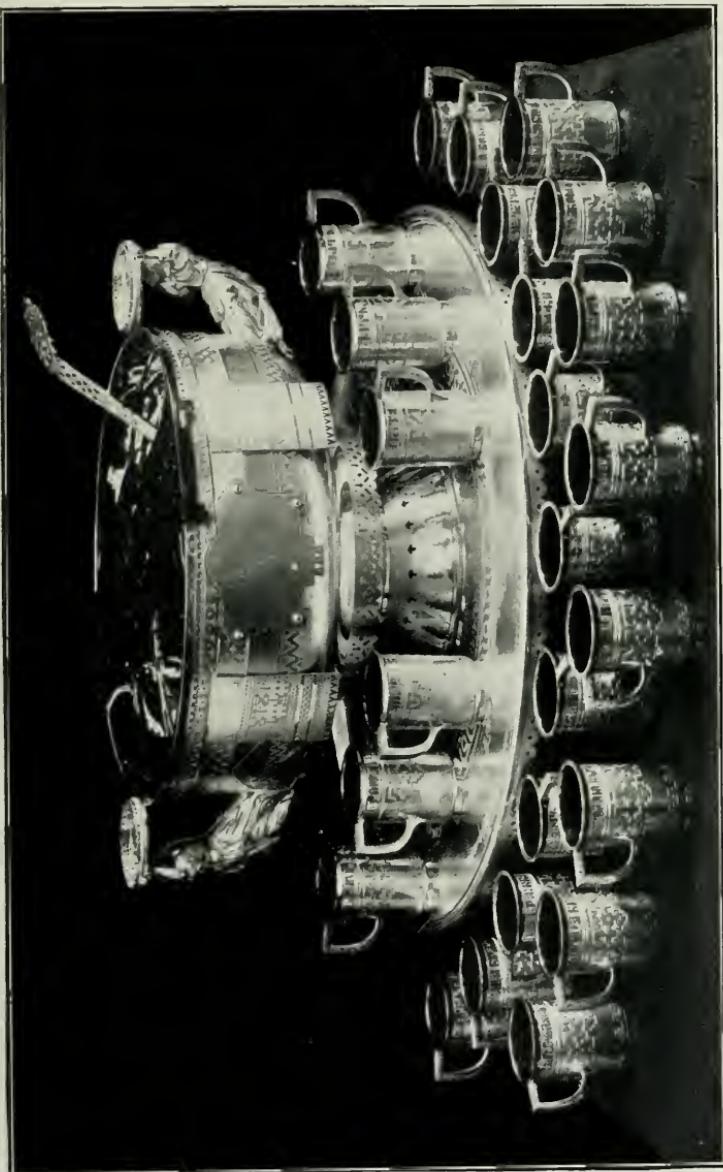
you to accept from the Russian Ministry of Marine, in remembrance of your last summer's voyage, in company with three Russian warships, to the Yenesei River, and also as an acknowledgment of the valuable services you rendered during that expedition, as testified by the commanding officer, Captain Dobrotvorsky.—Believe me to be, Sir, yours truly,

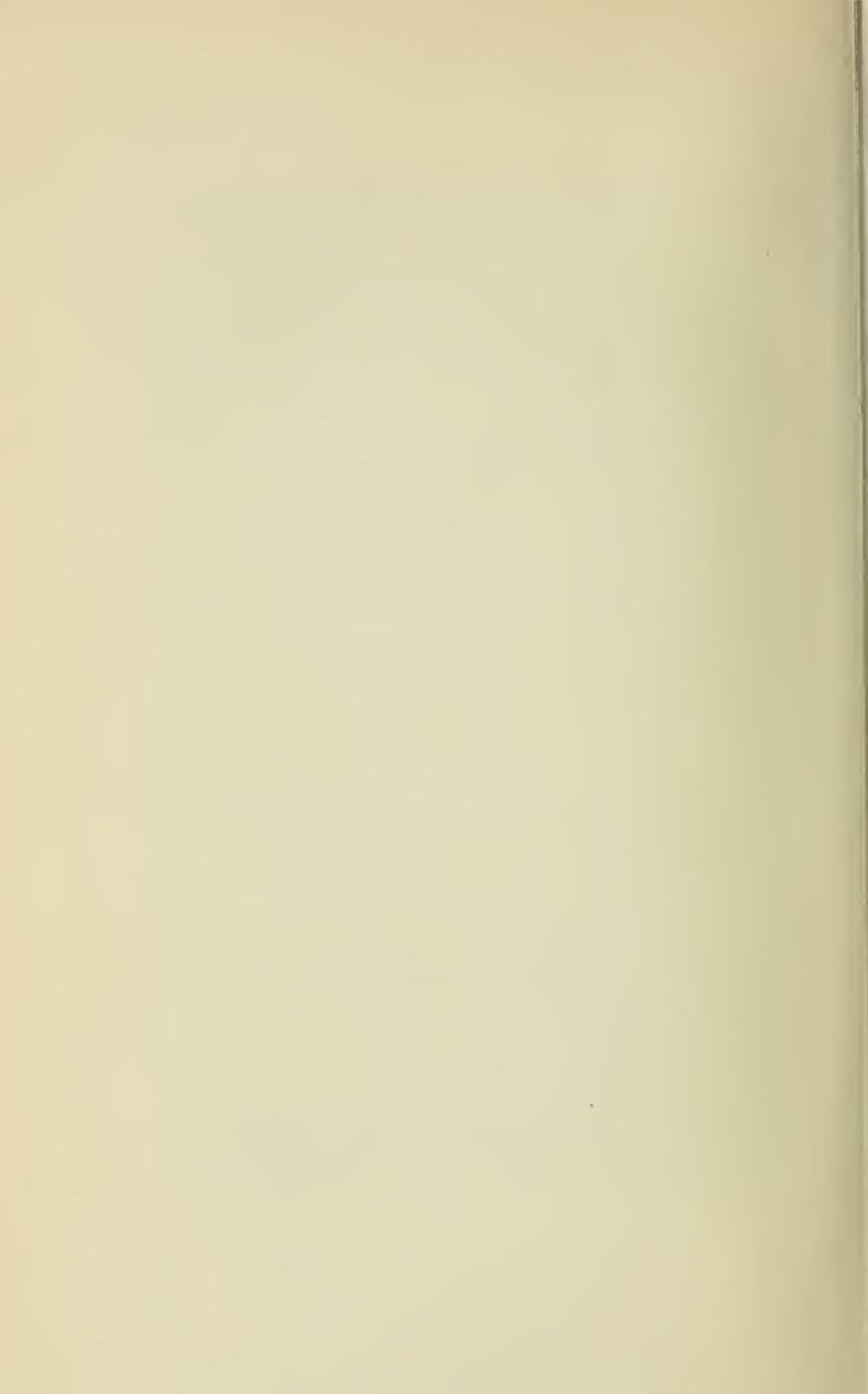
“N. TCHIHATCHOFF.”

This handsome presentation, as a practical acknowledgment of the disinterested efforts—during the greater part of twenty years—of a foreign seaman, stands out as a unique event in the annals of Russia. The *Times* correspondent at St. Petersburg thus concludes his report of the presentation:—“Captain Wiggins, who has now made nine voyages through the dreaded Kara Sea, is at present being consulted by the Russian authorities as to continuing his voyages to the Yenesei. To those who know the history of British efforts to create commercial interests with the northern coasts of Russia, now more than three centuries old, Captain Wiggins appears as a worthy successor to Richard Chancellor, who first opened up trade at Archangel in 1554; and, without in the least detracting from the value of the gift as a personal one, and the first of its kind ever presented by the Russian Government to a British seaman, it may well be regarded as an official recognition of the persevering energy and eventual utility of British

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SILVER SERVICE PRESENTED TO CAPTAIN WIGGINS.





maritime adventure in Russian waters. In this light, perhaps, the British Government may see fit to thank the Russian Admiralty for the honour shown to a British sea captain."

Had the British Government thanked the Russian Admiralty, it would have been almost like slapping its own face. It would have been a self-reproach for neglecting the merits and the work of an Englishman who had striven as much for the benefit of his own country as for that of Russia. The British Government had never lifted a hand to help the hardy, ingenious seaman in his efforts to extend commercial relations between the two Empires. It had voted £38,000 for an expedition to the Pole, which had no practical and beneficent end in view; but it could not spare a penny for furthering the great and useful projects of the "humble mariner." When a British subject, with no selfish ends in view, devoted his all for the promotion of commerce, the man and his project were too unconventional and unusual to call for a moment's consideration. The least that the British Government could have done was to place a ship at the Captain's disposal until the practicability, or otherwise, of the ocean route had been uncontestedly demonstrated. The Captain asked only for the loan of instruments for taking surveys and observations; but even this modest request was refused.

After reaching London, towards the end of

February, Wiggins was soon busy looking out for a ship to take a cargo to the Yenesei in the summer, and in fulfilling lecturing engagements.

In May he was the recipient of the "Murchison Grant"—a high honour, conferred by the Royal Geographical Society on distinguished explorers. It consisted of a handsome gold pocket chronometer, bearing the inscription: "Presented to Joseph Wiggins, by the Royal Geographical Society, for his services in opening up the Kara Sea route to Siberia—1874 to 1894."

The presentation was made by Mr (afterwards Sir) Clements R. Markham. At the annual dinner, held at the Hotel Metropole, the Captain had to respond to the toast "Recipients of the Society's Awards." He said that, although his labours had lain chiefly in the direction of commerce, yet science must always lead the way in exploration. He hoped that whatever might be the achievements of science, commerce would not be forgotten. Africa had been popular of late years, and gallant adventurers had accomplished much in that quarter of the world; but he trusted that the Arctic Circle, which was his own sphere, would not suffer neglect, and that Jackson would rival the achievements of Nansen. If the North Pole was to be reached, he hoped the discovery would fall to the lot of a British explorer. Mr Jackson was going to try the route of Franz Josef Land, and he (the Captain) highly approved of his method of leisurely observa-

tion, which was preferable to the pursuit of a preconceived hypothesis. He also trusted that, for the future, expeditions would not be required to learn the fate of explorers who had gone to the North and had never returned.

The Captain had bought the *Windward*, an old Arctic steamer, on behalf of Mr Leyborne-Popham ; and it was proposed to load and take her to the Yenesei, and bring her back with a cargo of Siberian produce. But the ship soon changed hands. Mr Jackson, unable to find an Arctic vessel for his Polar expedition, begged the Captain to let him have the *Windward*. His wish was gratified, and thus another ship for the Yenesei had to be found.

Events happened which somewhat changed the plans of Mr Leyborne - Popham and his trusty captain. The Russian Government, represented by the Board of the Siberian Railway, were having two paddle - steamers — the *Pervoi* and the *Vtoroi* — built at Newcastle by Sir W. S. Armstrong, Mitchell and Co., and Wiggins was requested by the Board to convoy these vessels to the Yenesei. It was therefore necessary to obtain a good convoy steamer, and at length Mr Leyborne-Popham bought the *Stjernen*, a screw steamer of 700 tons. She was to pilot the Russian vessels and keep them supplied with coal.

Every voyage made by Wiggins across the Kara Sea had features of interest peculiar to itself;

and the voyage, and the fate, of the *Stjernen*, together with the rough experience of the Captain and her crew, form one of the most stirring episodes in connection with the opening of the Kara Sea route.

## CHAPTER XV

### ROUGHING IT ON THE TUNDRA

Departure of the *Stjernen*, the *Pervoi*, and the *Vtoroi*—A remarkable wedding trip — Arrival of the ships at Lokovoi Protok—The *Stjernen* homeward bound—Fog, treacherous currents, and misleading soundings—On a reef—Saving the crew—Camping on the tundra—Mr Hugh Popham's plucky venture—Scaring the natives—Koshevin, the “good Samaritan”—Making up a rescue party—Searching for natives and reindeer—Incidents of the journey to St. Petersburg—The food of reindeer—Attacked by wolves—Twenty-five miles a day—Samoyede women's kindness—Frost-bitten seamen—Telegram to England — From Pustozersk to St. Petersburg—Reindeer exchanged for horses—in the forest—Scaring away wolves—Accidents—Reception at Archangel—A hundred and eleven days over the snow — Welcome at St. Petersburg — Russian search expeditions — The Russian Press on Wiggins—Interview with the Grand Duke Michaelovitch—Meeting of the Imperial Societies to hear the Captain's account of his work and aims—An historical gathering—Counte Witte and Wiggins—The Emperor's interest and support—“A great Yes, or a great No.”

THE *Stjernen*, the *Pervoi*, and the *Vtoroi* left the Tyne on August 8, 1894. The *Blencathra*, Mr Popham's yacht, with her owner and his wife on

board, accompanied the ships as far as Vardoe. The *Stjernen* carried three passengers—Mr Hugh Leyborne-Popham, a brother of Mr F. W. Leyborne-Popham, and Mr and Mrs Wostratine. The latter couple, Siberian gold-mine owners, were completing a remarkable wedding tour from their native city, Yeneseisk. They had proceeded from that city overland by sledge, during the winter. After visiting Moscow, St. Petersburg, Paris, and London, they were now on their way home, and, on reaching Yeneseisk, would complete a trip of something like 10,000 miles.

The three ships left Vardoe on August 26, and safely reached their destination—Lokovoi Protok, 500 miles up the Yenesei—on September 13. Mr and Mrs Wostratine joined a passenger boat, going to Yeneseisk, and the two Russian steamers were delivered to the representatives of the Board of the Siberian Railway. The *Stjernen* discharged her cargo, and, on September 15, sailed for home, carrying, in addition to her own captain and crew, and Mr Hugh Leyborne-Popham, the captains and crews who had taken out the *Pervoi* and the *Vtoroi*, the total number of persons on board being forty-nine.

All went well as far as Dickson's Haven. On turning westward the *Stjernen* encountered dense fogs, with strong northerly winds, but only a little ice. What happened later is taken from accounts written by Captain Wiggins, some of his officers, and Mr Hugh Leyborne-Popham. Dense fog con-

tinuing, the ship steamed slowly, the lead being kept going constantly. The ship was drawn, by unknown currents, some thirty or forty miles out of her course, into a locality, where, as it was afterwards found, deep soundings existed close to the shore.

Early on the morning of September 22 a cast of the lead was taken, but no bottom was touched at fifty fathoms, which confirmed the opinion of the ship being in a safe position, about twenty miles from the shore. About an hour later, Captain Cameron reported to Wiggins that the ship was going dead-slow, and heading south by the compass, with thick fog, and no sign of land. A few minutes later the mate shouted, "Land close by!" Over the port side breakers were seen close to leeward. "The helm was put hard-a-port, without reversing or stopping engines, and five or ten minutes' precious time was thus lost before Captain Wiggins could rush on to the bridge and telegraph, 'Full speed astern.' The ship immediately shot astern, but, being broadside on to the swell, it proved too late. She suddenly struck on the outermost barrier of reefs, and remained fast, the heavy swell afterwards driving her over the barrier into shallow water, where the rocks tore her bottom, and caused her to become a regular wreck. The largest anchor was quickly run out to seaward by Captain Brown at great risk, and every effort was made to get the ship's head round to seaward, but without success. . . ."

"The saving of the lives of our crew was

effected with the greatest difficulty, on account of the heavy seas rolling on to the rocky coast, and, but for the aid of our splendid lifeboats and picked crew, and the usual Board of Trade equipments, we might have perished. About ten men succeeded in getting ashore a mile eastward, but Captain Brown, who had charge of the party, signalled that no more could be landed there, on account of the heavy breakers. As luck would have it, we were all safely landed by four o'clock in the afternoon, together with a large quantity of sails and spars, which we used for erecting tents on the shore. A quantity of provisions, much damaged by water, was also landed. Strong gales continued from the north-east, and heavy seas were breaking over the vessel, and her bottom was breaking up. "Tents were put up, fires lighted, and food cooked."

On September 24 the fog lifted, and it was then discovered that the ship had stranded about four or five miles to the east of the Yugor Straits, about three from Mastnoi Island, and forty-five from Khabarova village. "With, at most, only a few hours of daylight, often interrupted by fog, no one appeared over the dreary, silent, snow-covered tundra to lend assistance; and, with these miserable surroundings, the crew spent several days, or rather nights, for darkness reigned over the greater part of each twenty-four hours."

It was impossible, owing to the gales and heavy seas, to communicate with Khabarova by boat. But it was absolutely necessary to seek relief, in



WRECK OF THE STERLING.  
(From an Oil Painting.)

[*Tobacco p. 288.*



order to escape long exposure, with insufficient clothing and food, and prevent loss of life. Something must be done to obtain help from the Samoyedes and the Russians at the village. The difficulty was soon solved. Mr Hugh Leyborne-Popham volunteered to walk the distance—forty-five miles—accompanied by three of the men.

"After walking some hours," writes Mr Leyborne-Popham, "we found we had undertaken a tough job, as the country was so wet, and we had to wade through marshes and small rivers, it being necessary to keep a straight course. It was bitterly cold work, for it was freezing all day, and snow came on in the afternoon. Our feet and legs got coated with ice after each swamp.

"About 5 P.M., after having walked hard, with barely a rest, all day, we sighted a Samoyede's *choom*, in which was a boy, who pointed to his ears and tongue, from which we imagined he was deaf and dumb. We found afterwards he only meant he could not understand Russian. However, he conducted us to another *choom*, about a mile off, where we discovered a woman, a small child, and a girl, who had just driven in with a sledge-load of firewood. As soon as they saw us coming, the woman picked up the child, and they all made off as fast as their legs would carry them; so there was nothing for us to do but to take possession of the *choom*, and make ourselves as comfortable as possible, with a small white dog, who had not been scared by the new-comers.

"We made up the fire, and attempted to dry

some of our wet things, and get our feet warm. After a couple of hours, two Samoyedes turned up, quite drunk. It really seemed hopeless to get any one to understand us; but, later on, several Russians arrived. One of them, Ivan Alexandrovitch Koshevin, knew Captain Wiggins very well, and our Finn, who could speak a little Russian, made him understand that the Captain wanted sledges sent to the wreck, which he agreed to do in the morning. On the following day five sledges were despatched to the camp of the shipwrecked seamen."

The story can be resumed by Captain Wiggins, who was delighted to see his old friend Koshevin approaching.

"After due consideration, it was decided to proceed at once to Khabarova, and procure assistance from the villagers, in order to bring in the crew, some provisions, and other articles from the vessel. My old friend immediately conveyed me to the village, which I reached in the evening of the next day, to find that Mr Popham and his men, completing their long and exhausting tramp, had arrived there a short time before us.

"Twenty-six sledges were immediately sent off to the scene of the wreck, under the charge of the Russians and their Samoyedes. By October 4 they managed, with great difficulty, to bring thirty of our crew to Khabarova, together with a large quantity of provisions."

Another expedition, of about twenty sledges, was despatched. Four more men were brought to

the village, together with numbers of packages of provisions and baggage, which had been saved from the ship in brief intervals of fine weather. And now it was feared that the reindeer would be knocked up, and be unable to take back the natives to their homes. Communication with the ship by boat was now rendered impracticable by the ice which blocked the Straits. It was necessary to scour the country in search of more natives and more reindeer.

"This extremely hard task was undertaken and well carried out by the merchant Koshevin, who, luckily for us, had great influence over the natives. On October 14 this good Samaritan, after sledging day and night, and having succeeded in obtaining the services of a number of natives, with their reindeer and forty-six sledges, arrived at the scene of the wreck. On the following day he quitted the ill-fated spot, taking the remnant of the crew, and some more provisions." Captain Wiggins speaks of the "voluntary and almost superhuman exertions" of the Russian merchant, "to whose care and prolonged efforts the party most certainly owe their lives."

Preparations had now to be made for the journey to Archangel—about 2,000 miles—by sledge. Some of the sledges were loaded with provisions and baggage, and others with sealskins and oil, which the natives intended to sell in the inland towns. Considerable time was taken up in preparing fur clothing for the men. Only a few ready-made garments could be obtained, and the women were set to work to make more clothing

from fresh reindeer skins, hastily dressed. With the prospect of having to face fifty, if not more, degrees of frost, every precaution had to be taken to keep out the cold.

On October 20 the party set off. There were eighty-seven sledges, with about two thousand head of reindeer. A sledge could carry only two persons and the driver. Two of the drivers were girls, and one a woman. The snow was about eight inches deep, and the ground very uneven. About dusk on the first day the party separated into three sections, each section now taking a different course. This division was necessary, in order to enable the reindeer to find sufficient food—the moss of the tundra—when turned adrift at night. On being unharnessed from the sledges, they were allowed to follow their own instincts in searching for food and bed. They can find the lichen, which usually grows in mounds, even though covered with four or five feet of snow.

At daylight the animals were hunted and lassoed, and driven by men and dogs into a rope enclosure, and harnessed for their day's work. On one occasion during this journey two of the reindeer were seized and devoured by a pack of ravenous wolves, only the heads and a few bones being left to tell the tale.

The time of travelling was restricted to daylight, which, during the journey to Pustozersk, on the river Petchora, varied from three and a half to five hours each day. The progress, especially of one section of the party, was extremely slow. The

average daily distance covered was only from twenty to twenty-five miles. Thus no less than thirty - two days were occupied in reaching Pustozersk, which is about 600 miles from Khabarova.

Every night the tents were reared, fires lighted, and tea and food prepared. The stores saved from the ship were used at first, and when they were exhausted, reindeer flesh and frozen fish comprised the one meal a day. The Samoyedes indulge but little in cooking. They eat reindeer flesh and fish raw. The Englishmen had skins to lie upon at night, but could get but little sleep, because of the intense cold. The Samoyede women treated the sailors as if they had been their own sons, trying in every way to protect them from the effects of the bitter weather. In spite of their care, and of all Captain Wiggins' precautions, two or three of the men suffered from frost-bite, and on reaching Pustozersk one of them had to lose some of his toes by amputation.

At this place the Mayor sent on an express messenger to Archangel, with a telegram announcing the safety of Wiggins and his men. This good news was received in England on November 21.

The Samoyedes and the reindeer were now exchanged for Russians and horses. The temperature had fallen so low that the barrels of the guns could not be touched without the fingers being burned, and wood could not be touched with the bare finger without some of the skin being left

behind. The sun shone brightly by day, and the moon by night, "with splendid northern lights and streamers, which seemed to hang down close to the roofs of the houses." The endless stretch of dazzling snow was exchanged, after leaving Pustozersk, for vast pine forests, which were infested with wolves. The tinkling of the sledge-bells was supposed to scare away the beasts. One night a wolf attacked a horse, but was promptly disposed of with a well-aimed shot.

The party now travelled by night as well as by day, only stopping at stations for fresh teams of horses. Fallen branches and stumps of trees often caused a spill, but the pitching-out of a man or two now and then was regarded as a little diversion on this trying journey.

When the travellers reached Archangel, on December 15, they were heartily welcomed by Mr Henry Cooke, British Vice-Consul. Seven of the men were suffering from frost-bite and lung complaints, and had to be carried to the Hospital, where they were most kindly treated. In a few days the journey was resumed, some of the party leaving Archangel on December 18, others on the 24th, and the rest a few days later. About twelve days were occupied by the sledge-journey to St. Petersburg, where Captain Wiggins arrived on January 11, 1895, but little the worse for his hundred-and-eleven days' ride over the snow. The welcome news soon spread, and the Captain was overwhelmed with congratulations from England,

Russia, and Siberia. Mr Hugh Leyborne-Popham went ahead of his companions from Archangel, and, sledging to Vologda, hurried home by way of Moscow, Berlin, and Hanover. "A little twelve-year-old fox-terrier of mine," he writes, "successfully weathered all our misfortunes."

It should be remembered that Captain Wiggins was in no way to blame for the loss of the *Stjernen*. The dense and long-continued fog, a strong and unusual current running to the south-west, an unknown reef three-quarters of a mile long, with more than sixty fathoms of water close to it, a high wind from the north-east and a heavy sea—these were the circumstances which inevitably rendered a ship liable to accident on any coast unprotected by lighthouses and fog-signal stations. No one had a word of condemnation, and the Press both of England and St. Petersburg united in a chorus of sympathy with the Captain on his loss, and in congratulations on the return of himself and his party.

When the *Stjernen* was considerably overdue, and fears were entertained that she was ice-bound in the Kara Sea, with only a slender stock of provisions, the Russian Government, at great expense, sent out two search expeditions. The *Lindesnaes* was despatched from Vardoe on November 2, with provisions, clothing, sledges, dogs, and everything that, by any chance, might be required. She went to the Yugor Straits, found

them blocked by ice, and returned to Vardoe without seeing any traces of the missing vessel.

The other relief expedition started from Yeneseisk, in charge of Captain Zeleffsky and Lieutenant Baron Maidl. Mr James H. Lloyd-Vernay, son of Colonel George H. Lloyd-Vernay, gallantly accompanied it as a volunteer. The arrangement was to steam down the river until the ice stopped the way, and then search the Siberian shores on sledges. This programme was carried out at great risk, and the plucky party returned safely to Yeneseisk towards the end of January.

An extract from the *Novosti* will serve to indicate the state of feeling in Russia towards Wiggins. “However costly the relief expedition may prove, it will be, nevertheless, but a trifle in view of the services which Captain Wiggins has rendered to Russian commerce in the north. He was the first, after three hundred years of silence, to pass the Kara Sea in his yacht, the *Diana*, which was afterwards followed by Nordenskiöld. He was the first to bring a steamer with a cargo to the Obi. Captain Wiggins was also very useful in last year’s expedition in assisting Lieutenant Dobrotvorsky. We are glad that the Captain has been found, and that the reason of his long disappearance has been made clear. Otherwise this route—of such great importance to the whole of Siberia—which in former centuries was utilised by Russian traders, might again have fallen into disuse for many years.”

A few days after his arrival in St Petersburg, Wiggins was invited to lay before the Grand Duke Alexander Michaelovitch, the Czar's brother-in-law, in a private interview, his plans for the prosecution of the sea route. This interview was followed on January 26 by a meeting, specially convened by members of the combined associations of the Imperial Russian Technical, Geographical, Commercial Encouragement, and Commercial Navigation Societies, to hear the reading of a paper, written by Captain Wiggins, on the maritime route to Siberia. The meeting was crowded, and there were present on the platform, on either side of the Captain, the Grand Dukes Constantine and Alexander Michaelovitch, General Ignatieff, M. Semenoff, President of the Imperial Geographical Society, the Ministers of Finance and Ways of Communication, M. Kazi, the head of the Navigation Society, who presided, together with several members of the British Embassy. A host of other well-known persons were also present.

M. Kazi read Captain Wiggins' paper in a Russian translation, in which was explained the feasibility of the sea-route, and its great importance as an auxiliary to the Siberian Railway. The railway alone, the Captain argued, would be unable to satisfy all the needs of the certain revival of all branches of human activity, which its construction would rapidly develop in the vast and wealthy regions of Siberia. The sea route would become absolutely necessary for the

transport of low-priced and heavy wares, which could not be conveyed cheaply enough over such great distances by the railway. During the past twenty years no fewer than twenty-four expeditions, with thirty-seven vessels altogether, had been made through the Kara Sea without any difficulty from ice, and without the loss of a single ship, until the recent wreck of the *Stjernen*, which was mainly due to fog. References were then made to the many hundreds of Norwegian vessels that had freely navigated these waters during the same period; to the particular kind of vessels required, and, generally, as to the importance, to both Russia and England, of permanently establishing this maritime route to the great river outlets of Northern Siberia.

The Captain made suitable acknowledgment for the prompt measures taken by the Russian Government to send out the search expeditions, and also to all officials for their attention and kindness to himself and his men on the sledge journey from Khabarova.

M. Kazi, in a brief speech, pointed out the importance of the sea route in connection with the project of constructing a new Russian naval port on the Murman coast. There was much applause for Captain Wiggins at the end of the proceedings, when he and Mr F. W. Leyborne-Popham were elected members of the Imperial Technical Society.

Although twelve years have passed since the

Captain faced this distinguished audience, it is even now too soon to appreciate the full significance of the remarkable gathering. With a more distant perspective, and the almost certain march of events in connection with the sea-route, future chroniclers alone will be in a position to do adequate justice to this historical scene in St. Petersburg. A humble British mariner, with a genius for pegging away and overcoming obstacles, pursued a great object—of but little, if any, practical advantage to himself—which could not be realised completely, as he was fully aware, for many years to come—perhaps not in his own lifetime. At last he so impressed the highest authorities in the Russian capital that they gladly listened to the story of his efforts on behalf of the commercial interests of their country.

The only historical parallel of this event was the welcome accorded by Ivan the Terrible to Richard Chancellor, in 1553, who received privileges and concessions for establishing an ocean trade with Russia *via* Archangel.

Two days after the meeting in St. Petersburg, M. de Witte, the Minister of Finance, reported to Wiggins a conversation which had passed between the Emperor Nicholas and the Minister. In reply to the Emperor's questions about the Captain's address, M. de Witte stated the arguments which had been advanced, and assured his Imperial Majesty that he was convinced of their soundness and importance, and that the Govern-

ment ought to do everything in its power to encourage and help in a practical way the development of the sea route. "We must go to work at once," he said, "and prove the route to be either a great Yes or a great No."

The Russian Government, so far, had moved slowly. It had granted concessions with regard to duties on merchandise shipped from England, permitted an English vessel with a cargo to go down the Yenesei, placed additional steamers on the river, and had given an order for a cargo of rails, and for vessels, built in England for its use, to be transported by the sea-route. Towards ensuring safety in navigation, it had empowered the Hydrographic Department to begin a survey of the mouths of the Yenesei and the Obi, and the adjacent coasts of the Kara Sea. The surveying party was in charge of Lieutenant-Colonel A. Vilkitsky, and operations were started in the summer of 1894.

According to the St. Petersburg correspondent of the *Times*, the authorities, apparently taking a new lease of energy under the new reign, seemed suddenly to have awakened to the fact that millions of roubles were lying, so to speak, strewn along the shores and tundra of Siberia.

## CHAPTER XVI

### CAPTAIN WIGGINS AS A LECTURER

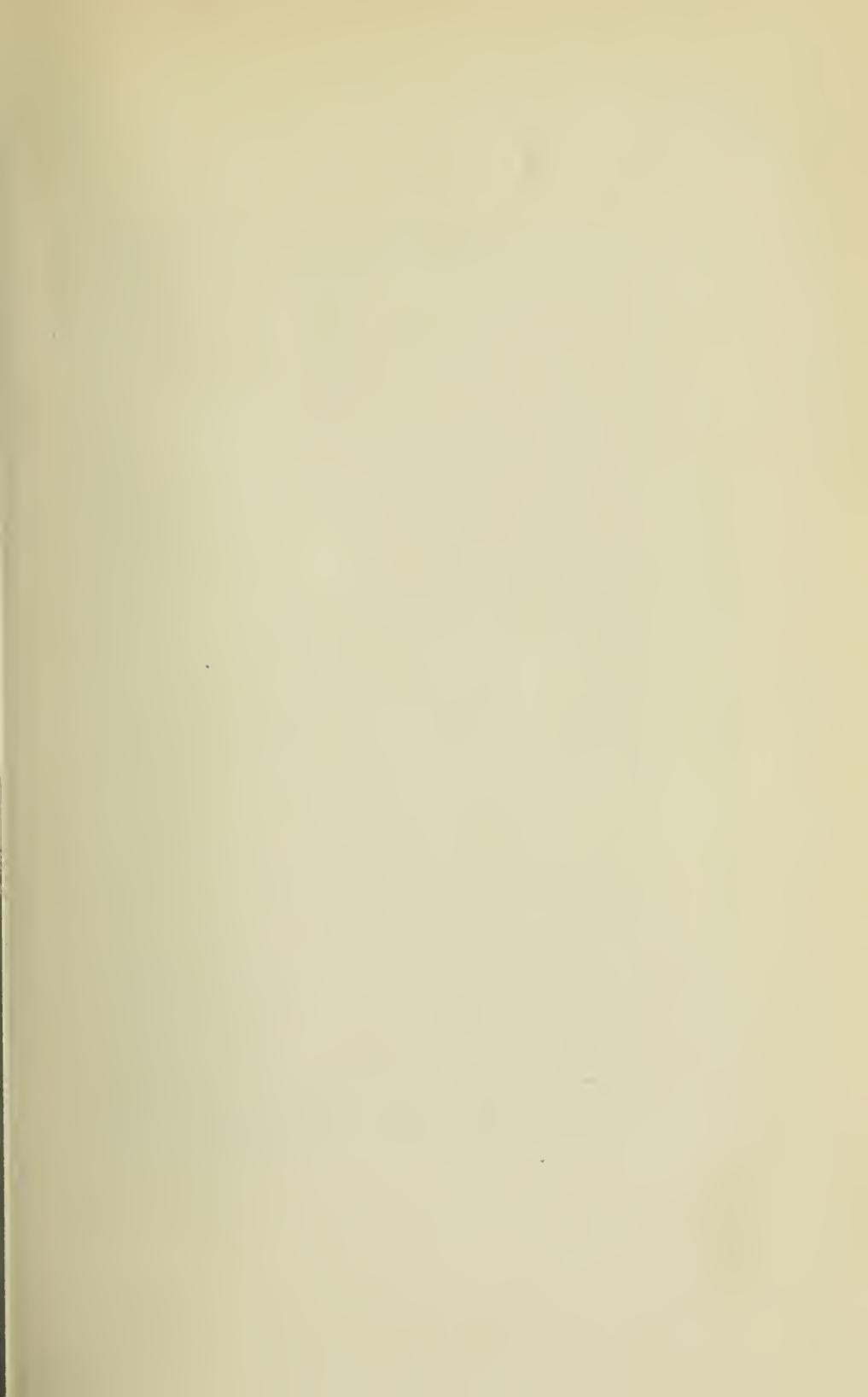
At the London Chamber of Commerce—Conditions for navigating the Kara Sea—Revolutionary effects of the Trans-Siberian Railway—The cry for new markets—Advantages of the ocean route—At the Society of Arts—Erratic condition of the compass in Polar Seas—Address at the Working Men's College—Meeting at Birmingham—Nationalities represented in Siberia—The exile class—An “old grandfather-admiral”—Lecture at Newcastle—Carrying tea from China to Moscow—Amongst his friends in Sunderland—On book-writing—Peace promoted by commerce—At Middlesbrough—Tour of the Czarevitch—Wealth of Yeneseisk—Two lectures at Dundee—Kara Sea compared with Hudson's Bay—Siberian compared with African mines—Education in Siberia—At the Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce—The Jews of Siberia—Presentation by the British and Foreign Sailors' Society.

ON the arrival of Captain Wiggins in England in the middle of February, 1895, his services were soon in great demand for the purpose of delivering lectures. It is needless to give a complete list of these public engagements, in March, April, and May. The more important were those at the London Chamber of Commerce, the Society of

Arts, the Working Men's College, at Birmingham, Newcastle, Sunderland, Middlesbrough, Dundee, and Aberdeen. A few brief notes of these lectures will introduce to the reader some phases of the Captain's enterprise and aims not hitherto mentioned, and will show the lecturer's ability in varying his subject-matter, and rendering it instructive and entertaining.

Sir A. Rollit, M.P., presided at the meeting at the London Chamber of Commerce, and the audience included prominent city merchants and bankers, and representatives of the Russian Embassy and of the Russian Consulate. The Captain, after briefly reviewing his voyages to Siberia, stated that at least thirty vessels had gone out to the Kara Sea for trading purposes since his voyage in the *Diana* in 1874, and that every year about ten Norwegian craft had sailed thither for the walrus-fishing industry, as they had done some time before his first venture. All ordinary steam trading-vessels, with a few additions to equipment and construction, were suitable for navigating the shores of Siberia; but it was essential that such steamers should be convoyed by an Arctic steam-vessel, of special type and build, for navigating and indicating the course over the Kara Sea, and, in case of need, affording assistance. Of this type were the *Blencathra* and the *Labrador*.

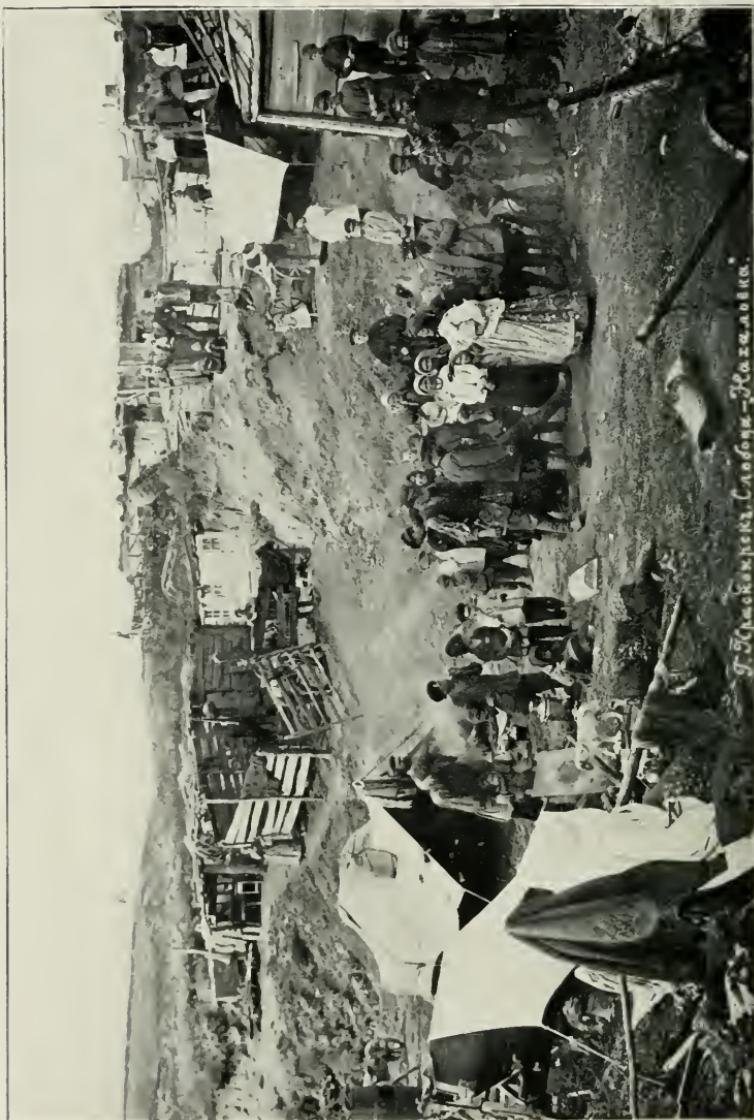
After referring to the warm interest taken in the question of this northern passage by the late



[To face p. 303.

HOLIDAY OF RAILWAY NAVVIES, NEAR KRASSNOIARSK.

J. G. JACKSHEKOVIC, CAGOGNE-KRASSNOIARSK.



Emperor, Alexander III., and to the Imperial gift in recognition of his voluntary services, the Captain spoke of the revolution which would be effected by the great Siberian Railway, which, when finished, would run over about six thousand English miles, and complete the railway belt round the world. It would infuse new life into the region so generously endowed by nature. People of all conditions would crowd to the country, and enterprises of every kind would be started. The productivity of the country would rapidly develop with the growth of population. But the question presented itself: would the railway be capable of satisfying all the demands of life, fast developing in all its manifestations? Looking at the immense growth of agriculture, mining, and other industries, it was impossible to avoid the belief that the railway would be quite unable to meet the increasing demand for means of transport. In particular, the increase in the export of grain to Europe would be dependent on a cheap sea-freight. It might be supposed that the traffic of goods from the Far East, such as tea and other valuable and fragile articles, also of mails and passengers, would prove so great as to monopolise the whole capacity of the line.

Nature, having endowed Siberia with the richest system of rivers, indicated, without ambiguity, the sea route as the most suitable, and, economically, the most advantageous means for communications with Europe. When the Russian Ministry

of Marine had completed its survey of the waters, the Kara Sea would prove perhaps even more open and free for navigation than was at present supposed.

Siberia was a veritable "Land of Goshen," where a fine horse could be bought for five pounds, calves at three shillings each, and grain was so low-priced that it was not worth sowing the land more than once in every three years, since one harvest in three sufficed for the wants of the people.

The Captain believed Russia was in earnest, and had awakened to the fact that she had important national interests at stake in those long-neglected regions. The cry raised in England for new markets and outlets for our stagnant and depressed trade should surely call for a response from such Chambers of Commerce as the one which he had the honour of addressing, and he believed that the Kara Sea route was fraught with the possibility of infinite benefit to England, if we were wise in time.

Sir Westby B. Perceval, K.C.M.G., presided at the meeting of the Society of Arts. The paper read by the Captain, for which he received his second medal from the Society, contained a description of his voyages, an explanation of the causes which led to the wreck of the *Stjernen*, and some particulars of Norwegian, Russian, and German expeditions. The Captain enlightened his audience with regard to the construction and

equipment of an efficient Arctic vessel. The fact that he had taken out ladies to the Kara Sea, "with pleasure and gratification to themselves," was, he thought, sufficient proof that the route was open to the world.

In the course of the discussion which followed the reading of the paper, the Captain summarised his observations of the habits and customs of the Samoyedes, and of the climate and natural products of Siberia. Referring to the erratic and useless condition of the compass in the vicinity of the Siberian magnetic pole at the northern parts of the Kara Sea, he said that a traveller, like Dr Nansen, would simply have to do without a compass. Any good navigator could determine his position by observations of the sun by day, or of the stars by night.

An enthusiastic audience greeted the "gentle mariner" at the Working Men's College. He spoke in a modest fashion of the chief features of his work, and reminded his hearers that, when he first started on his voyages twenty years ago, he was warned by friends that he might offend the Russian Government, but that, on his return to St. Petersburg, he was treated with the greatest respect and honour. With regard to the exiles sent to Siberia, they were not so badly off as some people imagined, and any exile who conducted himself properly was sure to succeed. The schools and the universities were admirable in every respect, and everything was done by

the Russian Government to spread the cause of education.

The meeting at Birmingham, organised by members of the Royal Geographical Society residing in the city and district, and held in the Birmingham and Midland Institute, had the pleasure of listening to a deeply interesting and racy lecture, in which the characteristics of the various nationalities represented in Siberia held a prominent place. It was asserted, the lecturer said, that "if you scratch a Russian you find a Tartar"; but, as a matter of fact, the Tartar was not what he was popularly supposed to be. He was a scrupulously honest and peaceful man, otherwise Siberia would not have been taken from him. The inhabitants of the country, for the most part, lived frugal lives, and but few were in a position of absolute poverty, whilst many had acquired great wealth. They were allowed to practise their various religions without hindrance, and lived quietly and peacefully under Muscovite rule. The Mongolian tribes, in the northern parts, lived by fishing and trapping, and selling furs to Russian merchants. It was to these people that he (the Captain) and his crew owed their lives after the recent wreck.

No doubt the sufferings of criminals in former times, owing to the crude means of transport to Siberia, must have been terrible. But the means at the disposal of a more enlightened Government enabled those unhappy mortals to be deported with

considerable ease and comfort. Large steamers on the rivers were available for the purpose, whilst the great railway to Vladivostok would further lessen the hardships of their journey. Although thousands of criminals had to be handled, and kept in durance, whereby they could not be a terror to the State, yet about two-thirds of the exiles, with their wives, families, and other relations, were allowed comparative liberty. It was an economy of the Government not to put those people in prison. The object was to colonise Siberia.

The Captain then described the sea route, with the aid of lantern views, and, as he was addressing a Birmingham audience, laid emphatic stress upon the commercial aspects of the route. He testified to the esteem in which he had been held by the Russians when piloting them through some of their own territory, and observed that he was looked upon amongst Russian naval officers as a sort of "old-grandfather admiral." Referring to the drinking habits of the people, he said that he "found only one teetotaler in Siberia besides himself, and he was a bishop." As to the gold and other mineral wealth of the country, he explained that capital was plentiful, and the only lack was labour and machinery, in order to work the mines.

In his lecture at the Lovaine Hall, Newcastle, under the auspices of the Tyneside Geographical Society, and with Mr Henry F. Swan as chairman, the Captain described in graphic terms the wreck

of the *Stjernen*, and the long journey of the crew over the frozen tundra. Amongst other topics to which he drew attention was the Siberian Railway, and the wonderful changes which it would bring about. At the present time, he said, hundreds and hundreds of sledges might be seen slowly carrying tea from East to West. It took from eighteen months to two years to bring tea from China to Moscow. But the railway would revolutionise this antiquated method of transport.

In Sunderland, where the Captain had so many personal friends, he took the large and sympathetic audience into his confidence. During the twenty years of his Siberian work he had addressed, he said, many hundreds and thousands of people. He had not written his book yet, although he had been teased very much about it. He had a prejudice against book-writing, for he thought that a man had no occasion to write of his deeds until he was about to finish his work. Then, when he had nothing else to do, he could sit down and detail what he had tried to accomplish. He had preserved many records of his voyages for that purpose. He then proceeded to give an outline of his experiences in the Kara Sea and in Siberia.

In responding to a vote of thanks, he assured his hearers that he thoroughly believed in his own work. He had asked no man's advice, and none were responsible for his ideas but himself. If the work came to a final success, as he hoped it might, he would have helped to bind two nations together

in harmony and peace. He knew of nothing more effective than commerce to promote that relationship. He repudiated the suggestion, which he had heard, that commerce created antagonism. Commerce, pure and simple, never did that. There were three C's that he firmly believed in, namely, Christianity, Commerce, and Civilisation. Nations were bound to be benefited when those three C's were in harmony. Commerce must not be blamed for the selfishness of human nature.

The lecture at Middlesbrough was delivered in aid of the Nursing Association and Friends' Social Club. The Chairman, Colonel Sadler, reminded the meeting that Captain Wiggins had pursued his investigations and discoveries in the face of difficulties and discouragements which would have broken the hearts of most men. He was the sort of man who had made England famous in past centuries, and he could not be classified otherwise than a hero.

The Captain spoke of his first visit to Middlesbrough, in the days of his youth, when there was no railway communication with the town, and he had to be jolted to Stockton on a horse-tramway. Middlesbrough had the honour of supplying the first cargo of rails for the mighty track—the Trans-Siberian Railway. The western portion of the railway could be constructed with materials got from the Ural district, where there were iron manufactories; but the central portion could not be supplied from that source except at a vast

expense. The Russian Government had asked him, therefore, to take out a cargo of rails by the ocean route, and run them up by lighters to Yeneseisk. The Russian officers, who were with him on that occasion, expressed the greatest surprise to find such a city as Yeneseisk—so little did the Russians know of distant parts of their vast Empire. The present Emperor Nicholas, before his accession, had crossed from Vladivostok to St. Petersburg, and, realising the wealth of the country, soon persuaded the late Emperor to undertake the construction of the railway. Yeneseisk was so rich that it could probably buy up St. Petersburg. Many of the wealthy men did not want the place opened up, but the majority of the people were anxious for the development of commerce.

Although only a master-mariner, who had been poking his nose into a foreign country, and telling the Government of that country what they ought to do, yet he had been treated with the utmost consideration by the highest people in the land. He was to have had an audience of the late Czar, but his Imperial Majesty's illness prevented this arrangement from being carried out.

At Dundee the Captain addressed in the afternoon the members of the Chamber of Commerce, and in the evening a large meeting at the University College, convened by the Dundee branch of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society and the Dundee Naturalists' Society. He referred to his first voyage in the *Diana* to Siberia, when he sailed

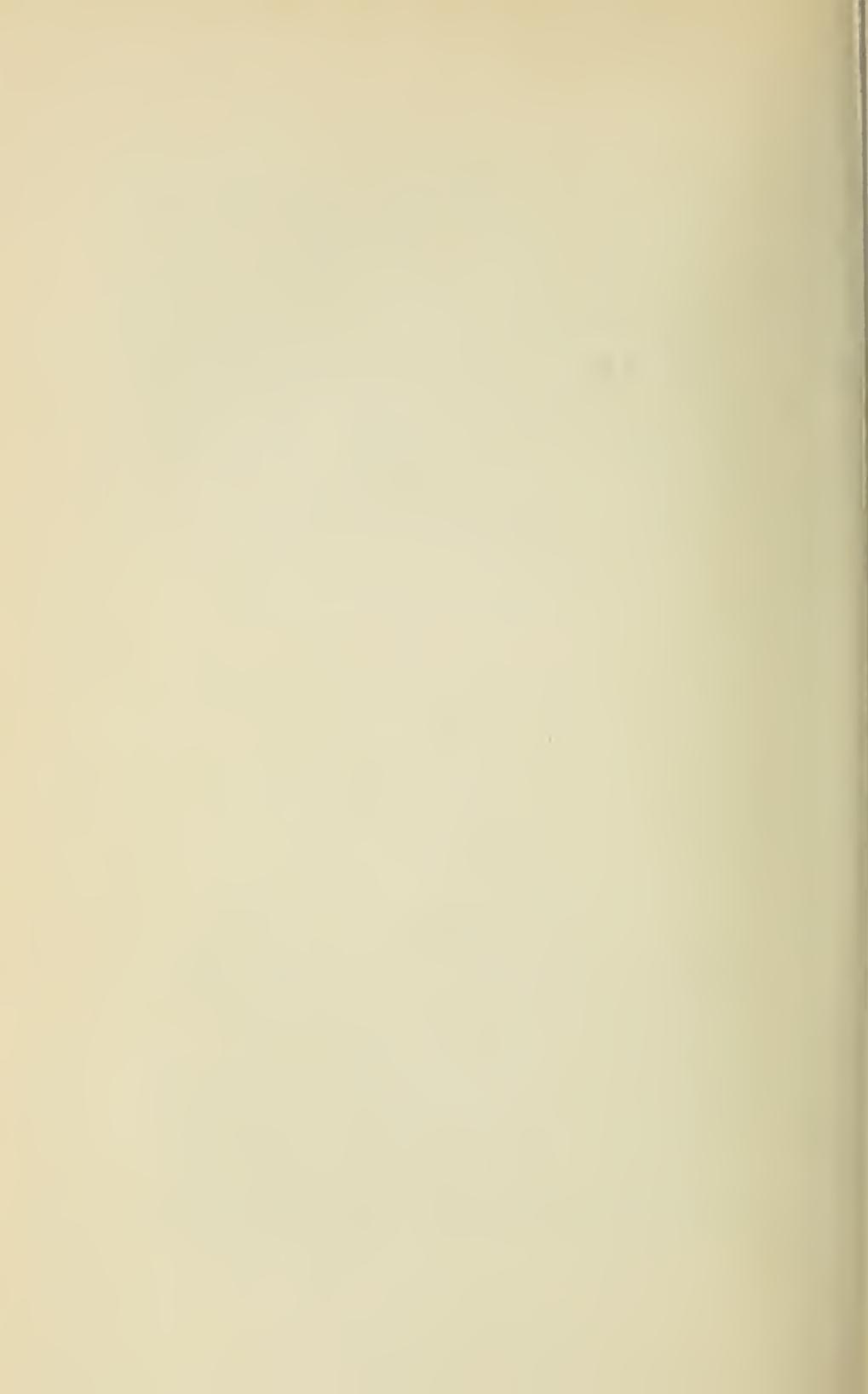


HIGH STREET, YENESEISK.



SAMOYEDES AND THEIR DWELLING.

[To face p. 310.



from Dundee, with a “send-off” of doubtful looks and deprecatory expressions of opinion from well-meaning friends. In that voyage he demonstrated that the Kara Sea was a mere bagatelle when compared with Hudson’s Bay. The man who lost his ship in it owing to the ice would be an idiot. A great deal had been heard about Mashonaland, but mines were never seen there such as those to be found in Siberia. Some of the merchants charged for the transit of goods at the rate of from £20 to £30 a ton, whereas the same goods could be conveyed along the sea route for £5 a ton.

He thought that the Russian Government had entered upon the Siberian Railway scheme more for strategic than for commercial purposes. When the Russian authorities were waking up to the importance of the sea route, he thought it was about time that British shipowners, merchants, and capitalists made up their minds to take action. The ocean route ought at once to be prosecuted in connection with the railway. A hundred ships might just as easily make the voyage in the summer months as one.

At the evening meeting, at which Sir John Leng, M.P., presided, the Captain spoke chiefly about the trade possibilities and the educational system in Siberia. Scattered over the land, of 5,000,000 square miles, and with more than 5,000,000 inhabitants, there were centres containing large populations, and it was these centres

that were tapped by the Yenesei River. The people in these regions required everything that could be brought to them from England. He believed that the inhabitants were more civilised than the people of Russia proper, taking European Russia as a whole—a circumstance which was due to the fact that the flower of the Empire had been exiled to Siberia, who had exercised an educational and uplifting influence upon the lower orders. A system of compulsory free education was established in the university towns twenty years ago, and there were schools for the training of female nurses long before similar institutions were established in England. With its enormous internal wealth, Siberia was a country which was bound to come to the fore, and that in the not very distant future.

The lecture at Aberdeen, delivered by invitation of the Chamber of Commerce, consisted of a skilfully-arranged epitome of the Captain's Siberian work. In the course of the lecture he referred to the disastrous Kara Sea venture of speculators in 1879. Contrary to his advice, four or five Baltic steamers, of eighteen and sixteen feet draught, were fitted out to go where there was only twelve feet of water. The inevitable failure of the expedition, and the return of the vessels, stopped all further enterprise for several years.

He made a humorous reference to the Czar's gift of a silver punch-bowl service to a rigid teetotaler. "For fear he should not have enough of it, there were added no fewer than twenty-

five silver mugs, for drawing off from the monster bowl."

He had a few words to say about the Jews of Siberia. There had been a great deal of misrepresentation with regard to them. He had found them magnificent fellows—agriculturalists, miners, and officials, and thoroughly contented. In describing the natural resources of the country, he said that on entering the Yenesei, the traveller struck, first, the fur districts, then the great timber districts, with their thousands of miles of primeval forests, and, last, the vast agricultural districts in Central Siberia, where every kind of cereal was produced.

All these lectures were delivered gratuitously, and in some cases the proceeds were given to local charities. No two lectures were alike. Taking them altogether, they present not only a history of the Captain's Siberian work, but also a clear view of Siberia, in its geographical, ethnological, commercial, and social aspects. Wiggins seldom used a manuscript, and sometimes not even a note. He could command the attention of the members of Chambers of Commerce and of learned societies equally with audiences less critical and exacting. Never indulging in rhetorical flights, he presented facts and incidents in plain, terse English, drawn from his own experience and knowledge.

He had always taken a lively interest in the work of the British and Foreign Sailors' Society, of which he was a Director. Its international basis

was one of its great attractions to him. His brother Directors had followed his efforts in Siberia with keen attention and warm admiration, and it was decided to present him with a testimonial, as a token of the regard in which he was held by the Society and by all British sailors. The testimonial was in the form of an Address, written on vellum, beautifully decorated, and appropriately illustrated with scenes indicating the character of the Captain's enterprise. The public were invited to express their appreciation of his "great and heroic services" by contributing to the "Sailors' Bazaar Fund."

This grand Bazaar was held at the Cannon Street Hotel, on March 27, 1895, and was chosen as the occasion for the presentation of the address. It was handed to the Captain by Countess Spencer, wife of the First Lord of the Admiralty, who opened the Bazaar. Its contents were as follows:—

PRESENTED TO CAPTAIN JOSEPH WIGGINS, F.R.G.S.

KARA SEA ROUTE TO SIBERIA.

DEAR CAPTAIN WIGGINS,—A Royal visit to the City of London by H.R.H. Princess Louise, Duchess of Fife, accompanied by the Duke of Fife, K.T., and the Countess Spencer, supported by the First Lord of the Admiralty, to open a Sailors' Grand Bazaar on behalf of the above Society, of which you are an honoured Director, affords your brother Directors and friends an opportunity to publicly express their appreciation of your gallant conduct, your sterling character, your sailor-

like capacity, and your Christian faith, as witnessed by your successful efforts to open up the great Kara Sea Route to the Yenesei River, and thereby introducing into the very heart of the almost closed Siberian continent the humane and civilizing influences of commerce.

We beg to express the hope that your splendid, self-denying service will yet receive from your own countrymen, as it has already received from the late lamented Emperor of Russia, his Government, and people, the generous recognition it deserves. That first Sunday morning service under the Society's flag, which led to the entrance into the Kara Sea, is a happy memory, and indicates the object of the Society, which is to produce sailors loyal to God, to duty, to Queen and country. Praying that you may be spared to see the desire of your heart, and that this service to commerce and humanity may be blessed of God, both to your own country, and to vast Siberia,

We have the honour to be, on behalf of the Society and friends,

FIFE, *Vice-Patron.*

BRASSEY, *President.*

JOSEPH C. DIMSDALE, *Treasurer.*

HENRY D. GRANT, *Chairman.*

(Also the signatures of twelve other Directors, and the Secretary.)

The Captain, in returning thanks, said that he had carried the Society's flag—the emblem of peace

and goodwill—nearly all over the world, and, if he had not as yet planted it in Central China, he had at least taken it with him up the Yenesei, to Central Siberia.

One of the most attractive exhibits at the Bazaar was Captain Wiggins' Siberian stall, where photographs, models, and costumes, illustrating the life of the Samoyedes, were shown. The silver punch-bowl service, presented by order of the Emperor Alexander, was also exhibited.

The salver belonging to the service now hangs in the library of the Royal Geographical Society.

## CHAPTER XVII

### LAST VISIT TO YENESEISK

Voyages of the *Lorna Doone* and the *Burnoul*—Support of Siberian merchants—Caught in the ice—Adventure of Mr Hugh Leyborne-Popham—Another sledge journey across the tundra—An early winter—Banquet to the Captain at Yeneseisk—Speeches of Siberians—The wizard and the bag of wind—The Kara Sea unknown to Siberians before the Captain's voyage—“A true cosmopolitan”—Presentation from the Yeneseisk Town Council—The Ladies' Gymnase—In St. Petersburg again.

ALTHOUGH public engagements occupied much of his time, Captain Wiggins was busy in the early months of 1895 preparing for another voyage to the Yenesei. The *Stjernen* belonged to Mr F. W. Leyborne-Popham, and she was not insured. In spite of his heavy loss, he determined to buy another ship, and send her out under the charge of Wiggins.

The *Lorna Doone*, a barque-rigged trading ship of about 700 tons, was bought at Dundee, and taken to Aberdeen to be transformed into an Arctic steam-vessel by Messrs A. Hall & Co. She was fitted with the latest appliances for navigating and working ships at sea, including the newest

apparatus for saving life and for heating the ship ; also an ice-ram, and a propeller capable of being fixed and unfixed at will. It was intended to proceed under canvas as far as practicable.

A full cargo was booked, consisting of provisions—tinned fruits and fish, biscuits, fifty tons of cured herrings, and large quantities of mining machinery, agricultural implements, locomotive boilers, furniture, Sheffield goods, etc. Cured herrings had been introduced into Siberia by Wiggins on one of his previous voyages, and they were so much appreciated that the people begged him to bring out a large supply on his next visit.

So great was the demand for space, owing to a glut of orders from Siberian merchants, that a second vessel had to be obtained. Mr W. Willett, of Chislehurst, joined Mr Leyborne-Popham in his venture, and the *Burnoul*, a screw-steamer capable of carrying about two hundred tons of cargo, was bought, hastily equipped and loaded for the voyage. Being of light draught, she was to be sent up the river to Yeneseisk with her cargo. After all, when the ships were loaded to their utmost capacity, it was found that many tons of goods would have to be left behind.

Captain Cameron, who had accompanied Wiggins on his previous voyage, was placed in command of the *Burnoul*, and received instructions to bring home the *Lorna Doone*, Captain Wiggins having agreed to go to Yeneseisk in the



CAPTAIN WIGGINS.

[To face p. 318.]



*Burnoul*, spend some time in that town, and establish business relations with the merchants, in view of a larger expedition in the following season. The mercantile arrangements of the preceding voyage had been in the hands of Mr W. Byford, of Monument Square, London, an old friend, and the business agent of Captain Wiggins. Mr Leyborne - Popham had now enlisted the services of Messrs R. M. Moir & Co., of St Swithin's Lane, and had appointed Mr H. Lister, who was going out in the *Lorna Doone*, as permanent agent at Yeneseisk for the Syndicate. This agency for the sale and purchase of goods, had been carried on hitherto by Captain Robert Wiggins and Mr W. Potts.

The obtaining and fitting of the *Burnoul* caused a delay of about three weeks, and it was not until August 12 that the two ships left the Tyne. They reached Vardoe on August 24, and Golchika on September 13, after meeting with a good deal of ice. The merchandise carried by the *Lorna Doone* was transferred to river steamers, and a cargo of flour, graphite, and other goods taken on board as speedily as possible, in order that the ship might get away before the ice closed in.

She left Golchika on her return journey, in charge of Captain Cameron, on September 22. When she approached the Yugor Straits ice blocked the way, and there seemed every prospect of the ship being surrounded, and having to winter

in the Kara Sea. In addition to her own crew, she carried the crew of the *Burnoul*, and the latter were not provided with fur clothing. Mr Hugh Leyborne-Popham, who had gone out overland to Yeneseisk in the spring, and was now returning to England, volunteered to go ashore, with three or four men, to buy furs from the Samoyedes, and to see if arrangements could be made for some of the crew to spend the winter with the natives. It seems to have been Mr Leyborne - Popham's intention to make the journey homewards by sledge after carrying out his self-imposed and gallant commission.

The volunteers reached land, partly by walking over the ice and partly by boat. In their absence from the ship, the ice suddenly began to break up. A channel was formed, clear and wide enough for the ship to proceed. Captain Cameron, seizing the chance of deliverance, steamed away, leaving the volunteers behind. He reached England safely on November 15.

Mr Leyborne-Popham soon obtained sledges, reindeer, and Samoyedes, and set off with the three men to Archangel, where Christmas Day was spent. The party reached England, without suffering any serious mishap, about the middle of January, 1896.

In the meanwhile Captain Wiggins had gone up the Yenesei with the steamers to a village, some two hundred miles from Yeneseisk. At this village he was stopped by the early winter and the low

condition of the water. The merchandise was landed, and forwarded to Yeneseisk by sledges, and the Captain reached that town towards the end of November, to find a most hearty welcome awaiting him.

Immediately after his arrival he was entertained at a banquet given by the Mayor, M. Wostrotine, and the Municipality. A few ingenuous and expressive sentences from the speeches delivered on that occasion will show the Siberians' warm feeling for the man and their estimate of his work.

" You devoted yourself, with praiseworthy energy and ardent love, to this question of the ocean route, and you settled it. It seems as if Fate watched over you, and spared you to discover this route. The Kara Sea, as if satiated with the many victims of bygone years, took you caressingly into its cold arms, and the waters carried you, a conqueror, to your goal.

" Already the inhabitants of our town look forward to your arrival as a necessary event in our autumnal life. ' Well,' people say, ' the steamers from Yeneseisk have left Turukhansk on their return journey; the swans are on their way to the south; now Wiggins is sure to come. Without Wiggins there would be something wanting on the Yenesei.' You, Captain, are our beloved guest, and I am sure that I am expressing the wish of all present in saying to you—do not forget us in the future, and be sure to come again to partake of our hospitality."

“‘ And what a lucky fellow is Captain Wiggins ! ’ say the Siberians. ‘ How many navigators of this route there have been ! One came just once, and there was the end of him. Others were surrounded by ice, and returned, without touching the Kara Sea. But Wiggins—once he has started—is sure to arrive.’ What is the reason of this ? In a Danish expedition of ancient times there was a doctor, who arrived at the Kara Sea. He wrote in his book that the expedition bought from an old wizard some knots of wind, contained in a bag. When there happened to be a calm, the seamen opened the bag, let out some wind, and the ship moved on again. Does not Captain Wiggins also possess such a bag, with the help of which he conquers the Kara Sea and us ?

“ Yes, Captain, you do possess that bag. We ourselves have seen it. In it there are different little things, such as unquenchable energy, profound devotion to and unshaken belief in your enterprise, thorough experience and knowledge of navigation, and, above all, an amiable character. When you meet with some difficulty, you take out of your bag one of the things which it contains ; but it is with the last of them that you achieve most wonders. It is that amiable character that has won our hearts. He who knows you will not only respect, but also love you with all his heart.

“ You came to us an unknown Captain, who had navigated a sea, which was also unknown to

us, except from the little we had read about it when learning geography. In some of our books it was not even mentioned. But now, thanks to Captain Wiggins and other mariners, all that has been changed. We know much about the Kara Sea, the Waigats Straits, and the white Yalmal land. They seem quite near to us now. We wish that by this route, which Captain Wiggins has prepared for us, many Siberians may go to and fro. We have as yet no steamers to send to Europe; but let us express our most profound gratitude to him who opened this route, if not for us, for our posterity.

“The North-east Route forms the object upon which you have expended not only your strength and the best years of your life, but also your personal means. In our eyes you appear as a true cosmopolitan, who formed a great idea for the benefit of humanity. You are indifferent as to who shall profit by this route; for you are just as ready to take a voyage through the Kara Sea for the benefit of a Russian naval expedition as for an English mercantile one, your one endeavour being to prove the practicability of this route. Your name will always be dear to Siberia, and we welcome you again, after the anxiety of last year—delighted to see you in our midst. We drink the health of dear, indefatigable Captain Wiggins, and wish him all success in his difficult work, giving him our heartfelt thanks for establishing the Kara Sea route.”

Unfortunately, there is no available record of the Captain's reply to these simple and sincere expressions of regard, which came from the lips of Siberian merchants and gold-mine owners in the heart of the Russian Empire.

The Captain was also the recipient of an illuminated and illustrated address from the Town Council. The artistic features—sketches of scenes on the Yenesei and emblematic designs—were executed by a talented artist-exile. The pupils at the Ladies' Gymnase also presented a gift and an address of welcome. "Your bold journeys on the Northern Ocean," said the ladies, "prove to the world that, with knowledge and perseverance, there is little in the world that can be considered impossible. Europe and Asia have become neighbours, not only on firm land, but also by the sea."

During this visit to Yeneseisk—which extended to nearly two months, and proved to be his last—the Captain made every effort to promote and foster business relationships between the merchants and English manufacturers. When he left the town, towards the end of January 1896, the prospects of commerce were extremely bright. He returned to Europe by sledge and railway—this being his sixth sledge-journey across Siberia—and spent more than a month in St. Petersburg, consulting with Ministers, the Imperial Societies, and various merchants about future business. He obtained orders for the purchase of steamers

in England, and for taking them through the Kara Sea to Siberia. He also obtained concessions for working gold-mines, and entered into negotiations with a mine-owner for the transfer of his property to a Syndicate in London. The conditions of sale, however, were not acceptable to the Syndicate, and the project fell through.

Social engagements claimed a considerable portion of the Captain's time. His company was eagerly sought by a large circle of Russian friends, for whom his vivacity, intelligence, and transparency of character had a powerful charm.

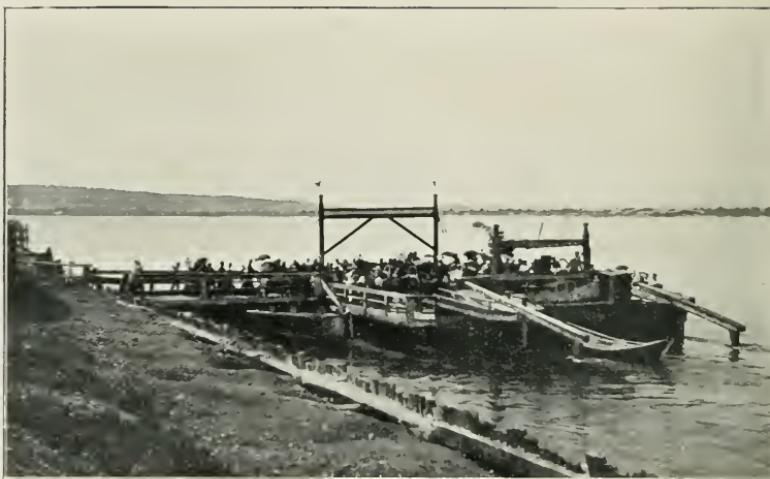
## CHAPTER XVIII

### A BROKEN VOYAGE

Mismanagement and its result—Flotilla of six steamers—Arrangements for the voyage to the Yenesei—Captain Wiggins and the *Glenmore*—A preposterous order from London—The predicament at Vardoe—The Captain refuses to proceed—His attempts to avert failure—His final decision—Voyage of the *Lorna Doone* and the *Dolphin*—The Captain's devotion to the interests of Mr Leyborne-Popham—Newspaper rumours—“Serious allegations”—Vindication of Wiggins by Lieutenant-Colonel Vilkitsky.

SOON after returning home in March 1896, Captain Wiggins lectured at Norwich, Harrogate, London, and elsewhere. One of his lectures was delivered, very appropriately, before the Anglo-Russian Literary Society, the chief object of the Society being to promote friendly relations between England and Russia. Mr Edward A. Cazalet presided, and the interest of the meeting was strengthened by the presence amongst the audience of several representative Russians and Siberians, some of whom took part in the proceedings. The rest of his time, until August, was fully taken up in arranging for another journey to the Kara





FERRY OVER THE ANGARA AT IRKUTSK.



ON LAKE BAIKAL.

[To *face p. 327.*

Sea, projected by Mr Leyborne-Popham's Syndicate. This voyage, in a pecuniary sense, promised to be the most important which he had ever undertaken. The expedition was to consist of six vessels, some of them conveying valuable cargoes, and Wiggins was to be responsible for the safety of the entire flotilla. Owing to mismanagement, three of the vessels were unable to leave Vardoe, and thus various parties were involved in heavy losses. It was the occasion of inexpressible disappointment, vexation, and even distress to the Captain, especially as he was made the scapegoat for a time for other people's blundering. It is necessary to enter into a little detail in order to place the Captain's position in its true light.

By the end of July arrangements were concluded for sending out the six vessels. They comprised two paddle-steamers—the *Glenmore*, costing nearly £13,000, and the *Scotia*; a screw-propeller steamer, the *Dolphin*; the twin-screw yacht, *Father John of Cronstadt*; the screw-steamer *Mula*, and the *Lorna Doone*. The last vessel—the only one fitted and equipped for cutting a passage through the ice—was to carry a cargo of about 1,000 tons, and to act as convoy to the other vessels. The *Glenmore*, bought by M. Wostrotine for service on the upper reaches of the Yenesei, and the *Father John*, bought by another Siberian merchant for service on Lake Baikal, were to be delivered to their respective owners at the mouth of the river. The *Dolphin*

and the *Scotia* were to carry merchandise up to Yeneseisk. The *Mula* was to be loaded with a supplementary cargo of coal for the whole flotilla, and also a quantity of coal to be discharged at Khabarova for the Russian Government. It was arranged that all the vessels—some starting from the Thames and the Tyne, and others from Scottish ports—should meet at Vardoe and proceed together, with Wiggins as Commodore, to the Kara Sea and the Yenesei.

Wiggins undertook to supervise the repairs and alterations to the *Glenmore*—carried out at Glasgow—and then take the ship to Vardoe. Considerable delay occurred in executing these repairs, and also from other causes, for none of which Wiggins could be held responsible, and the *Glenmore* was not able to leave Glasgow until August 18. By that time the *Lorna Doone* had reached Vardoe. The *Dolphin*, the *Mula*, the *Scotia*, and the *Father John* arrived two or three days later.

The Syndicate's agents suggested to Wiggins, before he left Glasgow with the *Glenmore*, that the other steamers should proceed on their voyage and wait for him at Khabarova, in the Yugor Straits, and thus probably save time, as the *Glenmore* was a boat of higher speed than the other steamers. The Captain did not approve of the suggestion. He was convinced that it would be safer to carry out the original plan. When the agents again urged the proposal, he gave

way, and said he would do his best to overtake the other steamers in the *Glenmore*.

On reaching Vardoe on August 25, he was greatly astonished to find that only the *Lorna Doone*, the *Dolphin*, and the *Mula* had gone on to the Straits. The two frail vessels, the *Father John* and the *Scotia*, were left to be escorted by the *Glenmore*, herself only a paddle-boat. But another circumstance caused still greater astonishment. He found that the captains of the *Lorna Doone* and the *Dolphin* had received orders from London to proceed from the Straits across the Kara Sea to the Yenesei, in the event of Wiggins not reaching Khabarova by the time the *Mula* had discharged the coal ordered by the Russian Government.

Not a hint of such a preposterous order had reached Wiggins. Had he been consulted, he would have refused, without a moment's hesitancy, to agree to such an arrangement; and if the agents had persisted, he would have thrown up his command. It must be remembered that the *Lorna Doone* was the convoy ship—the only vessel out of the six specially fitted to encounter ice, and to ensure the safety of her companions. There was but little prospect of meeting with any serious difficulty from ice on the west of the Yugor Straits. It was at the Straits, and eastward in the Kara Sea, where the danger lay. And yet Captain Wiggins was expected to go forward with two paddle-boats and a yacht, not only to the

Straits, but across the “great Ice-cellars” to Golchika. Probably at the first contact with ice the paddle-wheels would have been smashed to fragments.

There are other circumstances to be borne in mind in passing judgment upon this preposterous order from London. The Syndicate was under contract with Mr Thomas Wardropper, the representative of the owner of the *Father John*, to convoy that yacht by the *Lorna Doone* to the Yenesei. Moreover, it was essential that fur clothing should be ready for the use of every seaman, in the event of severe frost, and the *Lorna Doone* carried the fur clothing for the crews of all the vessels. No furs could be obtained at Vardoe, and if the Captain had proceeded to the Kara Sea without such provision against cold for the men of the three steamers he would have incurred serious responsibility. With regard to the question of coaling, it is true that the Captain of the coal-tender, the *Mula*, had been ordered to wait at the Yugor Straits until Wiggins arrived. The *Glenmore*, the *Father John*, and the *Scotia* could carry fuel for only six or seven days’ steaming. Had Wiggins gone forward and failed to meet with the *Mula*—a contingency not at all unlikely—he would have been unable, from lack of coal, either to proceed to the Kara Sea or to return to Vardoe. The three vessels would have been forced to winter at the Straits.

Instructions were awaiting Wiggins at Vardoe,

to proceed on his voyage at once. This he absolutely refused to do, and, under all the circumstances which have been detailed, his refusal was perfectly justifiable. Nevertheless, he did his utmost to avert the disastrous consequences of the acts of others. He telegraphed to several places in Norway for an Arctic vessel to serve as convoy in place of the *Lorna Doone*, but failed to secure a suitable ship. Still unwilling to abandon the slightest hope of getting away and crossing the Kara Sea, even in the face of great risk, he made a vigorous effort to secure a coal steamer to accompany the *Glenmore* and the other two vessels on their voyage. But he found that it would be impossible to get a tender loaded and brought to Vardoe for at least ten days. It was now about September 5, and by the time the tender arrived the season would be too advanced to start for the Yenesei. Moreover, no ice-master could be found to accept the responsibility of going with the paddle-steamers to the Kara Sea without a suitable convoy.

In spite of all the objections and difficulties which stood in the way, the agents kept urging the Captain to proceed to the East; but he resolutely declined to imperil life and property on a foolhardy voyage. "Your persuasions or requests," he telegraphed, "fail to influence me to do wrong. I therefore repeat I decline proceeding across the Kara Sea with these steamers alone, or to Khabarova with the certainty of returning."

No doubt the agents, in ordering the *Lorna*

*Doone* and the *Dolphin* to go forward to the Yenesei, were actuated by motives which had the interests of the expedition in view. But it is quite impossible to account for the short-sighted vision which the order betrayed—the failure to discern the inevitable consequences of carrying out such an order. The ocean arrangements were under the control of Captain Wiggins, and it was impressed upon him that he was responsible for the safety of all the vessels. Looking at all the facts squarely, the action of the agents was a rash and unwarrantable interference with the marine arrangements, and it destroyed the prospect of an entirely successful expedition.

In the end the *Glenmore* and the *Father John* were laid up until the following season, and the *Scotia* returned to Dundee with her cargo.

It was fortunate for Captain Basil Jones, of the *Lorna Doone*, that he was able to obtain directions and charts from officers of Russian ships whom he met at Khabarova. With this help he successfully navigated his ship to Golchika, and sent the *Dolphin* up the Yenesei. The captain of the *Mula* waited at the Straits for some days, amusing himself by taking bearings, soundings, etc., and then returned home by way of Archangel.

Captain Wiggins seemed more concerned about the loss which would fall on Mr Leyborne-Popham and his partners than about his own loss and disappointment. He had loyally done his utmost in the interests of his “patron,” who had risked such

a large amount of capital to establish a regular steamship service to the Yenesei. His energetic and faithful efforts to render the latest venture remunerative to the Syndicate had now been foiled, at least to a large extent, by the indiscreet act of persons who showed by their action how little they knew of the conditions for safely navigating the Kara Sea.

The Captain's reputation was soon endangered by false rumours, spread abroad by newspaper telegrams and paragraphs, in both England and Russia. The St. Petersburg journal, the *Novoe Vremya*, reproduced from the *Gazette of Commerce and Industry*—the official organ of the Russian Ministry of Finance—the substance of an article which made “serious allegations” against the conduct of the Captain. He was said to have compelled three steamers under his charge to put back, after going no further than Vardoe, thus “obliging the Captains of the *Lorna Doone*, the *Dolphin*, and the *Mula*, whom he had arranged to meet in the Kara Sea, to continue their voyage to the Yenesei at their own risk and peril, seeing that they had no knowledge of the route.” The baseless character of these allegations is evident from the facts already stated. It is not clear, however, from what source the Ministry of Finance received this report, which it too hastily credited.

A Yeneseisk journal — representing certain Siberian merchants, who had made fortunes out of the overland route, and consequently, as already

intimated, were not favourably disposed towards the question of the development of trade by the sea route—ascribed the Captain's conduct to umbrage at the fact of any vessels attempting to make the voyage through the Kara Sea without his services. This assertion was ridiculous, in the face of the Captain's often-repeated assurance that any skilful seaman, with some knowledge of Arctic seas, could easily navigate the Kara Sea in safety with a suitable vessel.

The Captain maintained a dignified silence, making no attempt, through the Press, to defend his conduct. This was not the first time that, when unjustly and falsely accused, he took no measures to put himself right in the eyes of the public. He had a strong and splendid faith in the power of truth to assert itself, but seemed forgetful that truth takes time to win supremacy, an envious and captious world, in the meanwhile, readily accepting a lie. He was fully convinced, with regard to the latest reports and rumours, that people who knew him, and whose friendship or regard was worth having, would refuse to credit the charges now advanced. Some of his friends, however, took up the cudgels in his defence, and in letters to newspapers made known to the world the actual facts of the affair at Vardoe. By this means misapprehensions, entertained by many people, were dispelled, and the cloud over the Captain's reputation passed away.

One, at least, of the vindications which appeared

in the Press should be quoted, especially as it came from the pen of a fair-minded, sympathising Russian, and was published in the Government journal, the *Novoe Vremya*, which had helped to spread abroad too hastily the “serious allegations.” The letter, a translation of which follows, was written by Lieutenant-Colonel Vilkitsky, the head of the Russian Surveying Expedition in the Kara Sea, who has been mentioned already in these pages.

“ While on my way back from the Yugor Straits Expedition, which had been placed under my charge, I met three vessels of the Wiggins’ expedition—the *Lorna Doone*, the *Dolphin*, and the *Mula*—which had then been waiting for some days in the Straits for the arrival of Captain Wiggins with three ships. Having asked some questions as to the building of the vessels which were being waited for, we were astonished that a seaman as experienced as Captain Wiggins should have sent on the three ships named above, and should have decided to proceed himself, without escort, with three other small vessels, which could not carry more than an eight days’ supply of coal. It was then explained to us, however, that the order to go on had been given, not by Captain Wiggins, but by a London firm.

“ We informed the three vessels, which passed several days more with us, that the passage to the Yenesei was free from ice, and they asked us to give them our charts and all useful indications for the

voyage in that direction. It was the more agreeable to us to render this service, as we thus had the opportunity of making a return to Captain Wiggins for the services he had rendered us previously, and, knowing the Captain, we never thought for a moment that the sailing of the ships in question towards the Yenesei would arouse in him any feeling of jealousy. In this we were not mistaken. Soon after our arrival at Archangel, we received from him, as in past years, a telegram from Norway—whither the *Lorna Doone* had then had time to return—a telegram filled with the most cordial sentiments towards us.

“Captain Wiggins, it appears, on arriving in Norway, had found his large ships no longer there, and had set to work to procure an escort. Telegrams had been sent all over Norway, but no escort could be got, and the Captain, naturally, had to give up the idea of continuing the voyage.

“Knowing Wiggins, I can say with certainty that he could not have acted otherwise in regard to this matter. Having devoted the best years of his life to the task of establishing maritime relations between Europe and Siberia, he warmly appreciates any step, by whomsoever taken, for the advancement of that work, and that is why our own Expedition, from the first days of its existence, enjoyed his notice. He hastened to share with us the fruits of his vast experience, chiefly by giving us information regarding navigation through the ice, and regarding points on which we should, above

all, fix our attention when drawing up charts. He desired that the feasibility of sailing to the mouths of the Yenesei and the Obi might become public property as soon as possible. All this we certainly could not have expected from a man said to be doing his best to retain the exclusive privilege of such navigation."

## CHAPTER XIX

### CLOSING YEARS

The Captain's retirement from Siberian work—Seeking his fortunes again—Three years in the *Craigmullen*—Lecture before the Edinburgh Geographical Society—Chart of the Yenesei—Discussion on the shape of the earth—Expeditions of Mr Leyborne-Popham's Syndicate—Glasgow Exhibition—Admiral Makaroff's project—The "ancient mariner" goes to sea again—"Poor little *Kori*"—Lecturing in Melbourne—On Board the *Sucvic*—Death of Mrs Wiggins—Her character and influence—Summons from St Petersburg—Russian project for relieving starving Siberians—Appointment offered to the Captain—in St Petersburg—Searching for vessels—The Imperial Commission—The Captain's illness—Transacting business in the sick-room—Rising and falling hopes—Sailing of the fleet without the Captain—A bitter disappointment—The irony of the situation—Death of the Captain—Condolence from Russia—Success of Russian expedition—Mr W. Byford.

BEFORE Wiggins left the Clyde for Vardoe he had already intimated to the London agents his intention to retire from the Siberian work, at

least in connection with Mr Leyborne-Popham's Syndicate. He disapproved of certain methods in the management of the concern, and felt that he could no longer co-operate without considerable friction. He had decided, therefore, to sever his connection at the close of the expedition, and the unfortunate events at Vardoe hastened the separation by a month or two. Twenty-two years had passed since he discovered the open sea, and demonstrated the fact to the world. He hoped that, at no distant period, a favourable opportunity might occur for resuming his enterprise, and helping to keep alive the interest in the ocean route. But his hope was not realised. He was never to cross the Kara Sea again.

On reaching England he was forced to look out for employment. He had no means of his own to fall back upon, and as long as health and strength remained he would not rely upon the means of others. Most men at sixty-four have either put off the harness, or think it high time to do so, and to pass the rest of their days in mental and bodily quiescence. Captain Wiggins, now that his sun had long crossed the meridian, and after a life so strenuous, useful, and eventful, certainly deserved a period of rest at eventide. But it was not to be. At the age of thirteen he first went forth to "seek his fortunes," and at three-score years and four he set himself to the task again, his determined spirit as strong as ever.

The Siberian passion was still hot within him,

and, had he chosen to do so, he might have rallied a few friends around him, and with their aid taken a shipload of goods to the Yenesei in the following summer. But a chivalrous feeling towards his late chief—Mr Leyborne-Popham—forbade such a project. He must look for employment in other seas.

About the end of November he received the offer of a lucrative post as commander of a large steam-ship, the *Craigmullen*, owned by Mr W. Goodall. She was to trade between South Africa and West Australia. The Captain hesitated to accept the offer, for the appointment necessitated separation from home and friends for two or three years. His brave, self-sacrificing wife—ever ready to forego personal wishes that the call of duty might be obeyed—at length shared with her husband the conviction that “the Divinity which shapes our ends” ordained this removal to the south, and cheerfully submitted to the long separation.

The Captain lectured before the Edinburgh Geographical Society early in the winter of 1896, and sailed for Natal on January 7, 1897. He did not return home until the end of 1899. It is needless to follow him in his trading journeys between South Africa and Australia. His heart being still in the Siberian work, nothing delighted him more than to describe his experiences in the Kara Sea and the Yenesei to public audiences, or to little groups of acquaintances in Natal, Cape-

town, and Australian ports. One of the pleasant occupations of his leisure hours was the preparation of a revised chart of the Yenesei, with corrections made from his observations, which he sent home to the Hydrographic Department of the British Admiralty.

At Durban he indulged, somewhat rashly, in a public discussion, in the Town Hall, with a sturdy advocate of the theory that the earth was flat, not round. But he was scarcely prepared for the rhetoric, eloquence, and the algebraic formulæ of the "flat" theorist, who was an expert orator on the subject. On the audience being invited to express an opinion as to who had the best of the argument, the show of hands was decidedly in favour of Wiggins' opponent. This was the first and last appearance of the Captain as a platform duellist.

On reaching England again, he naturally welcomed the quiet and rest of home life, and made no attempt for some time to find an appointment as commander of a ship.

The development of the sea route to Siberia had continued since his retirement from that work. In 1897 Mr Leyborne-Popham sent out the *Lorna Doone*, the *Glenmore*, the *Scotia*, and the *Father John*, with the *Blencathra* as convoy, the latter vessel carrying Admiral Makaroff from Vardoe to the Yenesei. He also despatched in the same season six steamers, carrying about 5,000 tons —chiefly tea — four to the Obi, and two to the

Yenesei. These ships brought back to England cargoes of wheat.

In 1898 the Russian Government raised the duty on tea, but the "English Sea-Trading Expedition of Francis Leyborne-Popham" persevered with its operations. Four steamers were sent out to the Obi with about 3,000 tons of tea, and a quantity of machinery. On returning home, one of the steamers was lost in the fiords of Norway. The *Lorna Doone* went to the Yenesei in the same year, convoying a schooner, for work on the river.

Emboldened by two years' success, the Syndicate despatched four steamers in 1899. They reached Khabarova, where one of the ships ran into the ice and sank. Whether this accident arose from lack of experience, or from reluctance to wait at the Straits until the ice had cleared away, there is no available testimony to show. Some of the cargo was saved, and the three remaining steamers put back to England. Their cargoes had to be landed and bonded at a heavy cost, and the serious loss occasioned by this expedition appears to have stopped any further operations of the Syndicate.

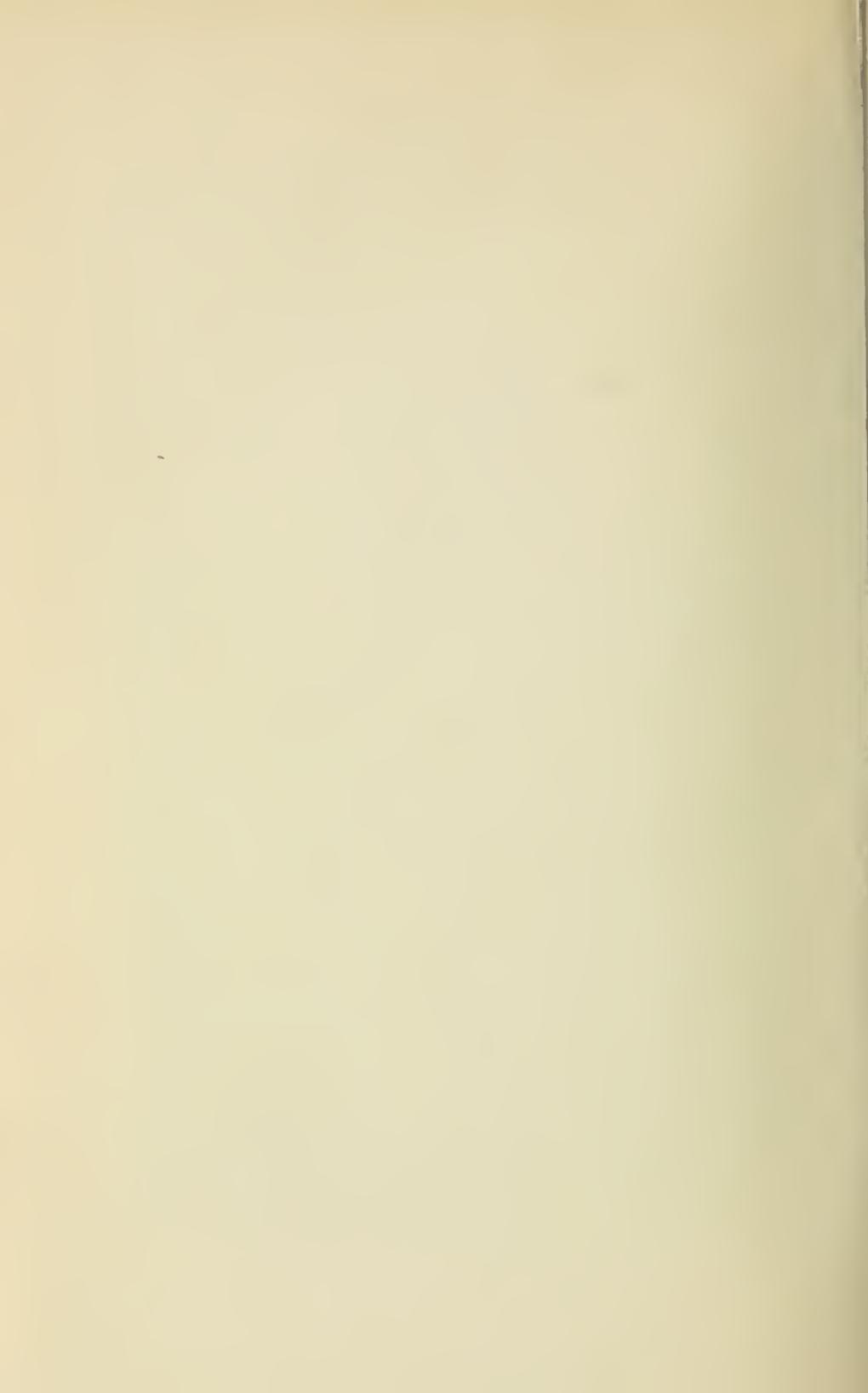
The Russian Section of the Glasgow International Exhibition of 1901 naturally excited Captain Wiggins' warm interest. He took an active part in spreading information concerning the vast resources of the Czar's Empire, and read a paper at the Exhibition on "The Com-



ANCIENT SACRED STONE, MARKING THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN TWO  
NATIVE TRIBES.

(South Yenesei Government.)

[To face p. 342.]



mercial Routes of Siberia, by Land, River and Sea." In November he delivered the same lecture at the Imperial Institute, London, before the members of the Anglo-Russian Literary Society.

In the same and the following year his time was much occupied in ship-surveying, and giving expert advice on marine matters. Though anxious to sail again to Siberian waters, no opening presented itself for the renewal of his gallant enterprise. Various plausible schemes of exploration in southern seas were put before him, with the object of securing his co-operation and leadership; but none of them seemed substantial and promising enough to win his support.

Towards the end of 1903, Admiral Makaroff proposed to organise an expedition for the Kara Sea, and Captain Wiggins was invited to place his services at the Admiral's disposal. The expedition was to start in the summer of 1904; but the imminence of war with Japan summoned the Admiral to take up sterner duties, and his project was abandoned.

The Captain, although seventy-one, and now called by many the "Ancient Mariner," was eager to get to sea again. He accepted an offer, made by Major W. Cooke Daniels, to take out the yacht *Kori*, of sixty tons, to Australia. The *Kori* was intended for the service of a scientific expedition to New Guinea, one of the members of which was Dr C. G. Seligmann. Wiggins contracted to take the little yacht to Sydney, and deliver her

to the Captain, who had been engaged to command her on the cruise round the great island of savages. Leaving England at the end of 1903, the *Kori* called at the Cape, and on her journey thence to Australia was caught in a terrific gale, and had to put into Hamelin, West Australia, for repairs. She reached Sydney at last, and was handed over to her new captain. Speaking of the "poor little *Kori*," in a letter to his wife, Wiggins says, "I had to carry her in my arms, as it were, across the stormy deep."

He spent a few weeks in Australia, and visited Melbourne, where he came across several old friends hailing from the mother-country. His fame had reached the Antipodes long since, and the Royal Geographical Society of Melbourne prevailed upon him to deliver a lecture on his Siberian voyages. The Lieutenant-Governor, Sir John Madden, presided, and at the end of the meeting the Captain was elected a Life Member of the Society.

He returned to England in the "noble monster-ship," the *Suevic*, destined to meet with a tragic fate three years later on the English coast. Expecting that the ship would stop for a few days at the Cape, he had undertaken to lecture there; but she stopped only an hour or two, and the lecturing project was abandoned.

A few weeks after reaching home he suffered the severest loss that had ever come into his experience. His devoted wife, whose health had

been failing for a considerable time, died on August 13, 1904. For forty-three years she had shared his hopes and aspirations, and to her influence the development of many of the fine qualities which distinguished him was largely due. Her removal was keenly felt, not only within the circle of close relationship, but also far beyond it. Her sympathetic and unselfish nature awakened warm regard and affection amongst a multitude of persons—in Newcastle, Sunderland, Harrogate, London, and elsewhere—who were privileged to enjoy her acquaintanceship, and at her departure they knew they had been deprived of a real and trusty helper in the toil and stress of life. Charm of character and charm of manner were irresistible attractions to all with whom she came into contact.

With the shadow of his heavy loss upon him, Captain Wiggins passed several months almost in seclusion. His seafaring life seemed to be ended, and his Siberian projects transferred to other hands. In his quiet retreat at Harrogate he reviewed his work, and set his hopes on its completion by enterprising men as enthusiastic as himself. But in April, 1905, he was suddenly roused from his reflective and restful mood by a summons from St. Petersburg.

Whilst the Russo-Japanese War was in progress vast numbers of the poorer population of Central Siberia suffered from famine. The lack of food arose partly from the Siberian Railway being entirely used for the transport of war-material,

partly from greedy merchants raising the prices of food, and also from the non-arrival of supplies by the sea route. In this distressing emergency, the Russian Government proposed to fit out a fleet in Europe, for the purpose of carrying, *via* the Kara Sea, some 50,000 tons of provisions. The original plan embraced the purchase of twenty steamers and forty iron barges. The latter, capable of carrying about 1,000 tons each, were to be towed up the Yenesei to Yeneseisk.

As soon as this humane expedition was projected, the Russian authorities communicated with Wiggins, and offered him a large sum of money if he would conduct the expedition from Hamburg, through the Kara Sea, and up the Yenesei. In a financial view, the appointment promised to be the most remunerative by far that the Captain had ever held. But this little prize, at the close of life, was destined to slip from his grasp.

On April 17 he received a telegram from Prince Hilkoff—who was responsible for the organisation of the expedition—begging him to come to St. Petersburg at once. He started the same day, going straight to the Russian capital. He had a hurried consultation with Ministers, and was deputed to look out for ships and barges suitable for the enterprise. With this object in view, he set off to Hamburg, and afterwards visited Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Dantzig, Stettin, Lebau, Copenhagen, and Revel. In about a fortnight he was back in St. Petersburg again, taking up his quarters at his

favourite hostelry, the “ Hotel d’Angleterre.” From this place he wrote a letter in a strain which showed that the energetic, buoyant spirit of the “ancient mariner” was almost as exuberant as in the far-off days when the *Diana* “danced” over the billows to the Kara Sea.

“If the Government should finally decide to go in for this good work,” he wrote on May 9, “I shall have to spin over England and Scotland, to seek up steamers and barges. . . . I warned the Government in 1894, when my paper was read before the Imperial Societies, and urged them not to cease constructing the railway until a double line was laid, and also—which was of greater importance—to encourage and assist us in opening out the rivers Yenesei and Obi to European commerce. Neither of these things has been done, and now, in their need, and at the last moment, when there remains hardly time to arrange for a few thousand tons to be taken out, I am called upon to do my utmost to lead this huge relief expedition, providing, first, that it is possible to carry out 50,000 tons to Yeneseisk and Krasnoiarsk, and, second, that the necessary money can be raised.

“To accomplish the task in such haste, they will have to pay very high prices for everything, for the withdrawal of such a number of steamers and barges upsets the trade. I believe that no less than £600,000 will be required to carry it all through.

“One good result—if the work should be done—will be the location at Yeneseisk and Krasnoiarsk

of a fine, powerful flotilla of steamers and barges, capable of running 50,000 tons of manufactured goods outward, and the same amount of cereals and other produce from Siberia to European and home markets every year for years to come. And thus I may yet live to see the day when the one great desire of my heart—after thirty years of irregular and costly attempts—is at last realised, and through the sad necessities of a calamitous war.

“I am now fully engaged in drawing up a long, detailed report of how the work has to be done. The huge cost of everything has to be reckoned and laid before the Commission of Grand Dukes, Ministers, etc. They will discuss the matter alone, and then with me, and I hope that the matter may not end in mere discussion.

“Another thing which the Government is seriously considering is whether the time has not now arrived to renew the duty-free concessions, granted years ago to me, and stopped when I had to abandon the work in 1896. If they would only grant these concessions as an encouragement to all European merchants, trade will flow in a main, and the splendid riverside flotilla, which I hope to bring out, will soon have plenty to do, and trade by the Kara Sea route will become an established fact.

“From this letter you can explain to our friends—who probably cannot understand why I should assist this Government at such a time—the real and humane reasons for my taking the work in hand.”

On May 23 Captain Wiggins discussed the great project with the Imperial Commission, and received instructions to return home and look for steamers and barges, and afterwards consult with the members of the Commission, who were to arrive at Glasgow in a few days.

He reached his home—Rossett View, Harrogate—on May 28, in bad health. On his journey from St. Petersburg he had contracted a severe chill, which, together with symptoms of earlier origin, proved the beginning of a fatal illness. In spite of pain and weakness, he went to Glasgow on May 30, and did his utmost to carry out instructions. His malady developing, he was unable to wait in Glasgow for the arrival of the Commission, and he reluctantly returned home. His work was done. But he was not aware at first of the serious nature of his illness, and he looked forward to restoration within a week or two.

During the following six weeks he communicated, almost daily, from his sick-bed, by letter and telegram, with members of the Commission, and with agents who were negotiating the purchase of steamers. A packet amongst his papers, consisting of telegrams received and despatched, with letters, and copies of letters—some written by the Captain and others dictated—is full of pathetic interest. In some of the letters the veteran advises Colonel Sergieff—the Russian Commander of the expedition—with regard to the fitting of the ships and barges, the engagement of pilots, the

quality of the tow-ropes, the fur clothing for the seamen, and many other matters. In two or three letters he reports an improvement in health, and a definite prospect of joining the fleet at Bergen, from which port it was to sail on July 25.

Many rallies were followed by relapses. Hope rose and fell almost daily. July 25 arrived, and the fleet sailed. The doctors hinted that the Captain might be fit to travel within a few days. He refused to abandon hope. He thought he might overtake the fleet in North Norway by starting in the mail-boat from Bergen in the course of a week or ten days, and telegraphed to the British Consul at Bergen for full particulars of the sailing of the mail-steamer. Another alternative was to charter a steamer at Hull, to convey himself, a relative, a doctor, and a nurse to Norway.

But it was not to be. Ten days passed, and the doctors still refused to allow the invalid to leave home. Then the final telegram was sent from the sick-room to the agent of the expedition : "Not allowed to leave my bed yet. Bitterly disappointed not able to join Sergieff. Wishing every success.—Wiggins."

To add to the irony of the situation, there were several vigorous movements in commercial circles for resuming trade by the Kara Sea route, and Captain Wiggins' services had been sought from three or four distinct quarters. A Company, with a capital of £500,000, was in course of formation for trading in the timber and working gold-mines

of the Yenesei district. Valuable concessions had been obtained from the Russian Government; Wiggins had given all the information at his command, and was to be appointed to the control of the ocean and river arrangements. Telegrams came to him on his sick-bed, urging him to see the directors in London at once. As this was impracticable, the directors went to Harrogate, and consulted with the Captain at his bedside. The other enterprises in process of formation were for the purpose of sending cargoes to the Yenesei and the Obi, and bringing back cargoes of Siberian produce.

Never, in the whole history of the Kara Sea route, had prospects been more promising than when the pioneer of that route lay hovering between life and death. His prolonged hopes and expectations seemed about to be realised by the firm establishment of a large and remunerative trade. Yet everything slipped from his grasp. He reached his Pisgah, and beheld and rejoiced in, the fair prospect, soon to be veiled by the mists of death.

By the middle of August it became evident to his medical attendants that there was no chance of his recovery. He lingered on, suffering intense pain, until September 13, and then quietly passed away. On September 3 he had entered his seventy-third year. The funeral took place at Bishopwearmouth Cemetery, Sunderland, and was attended by crowds of people, eager to testify their respect, admiration, and love.

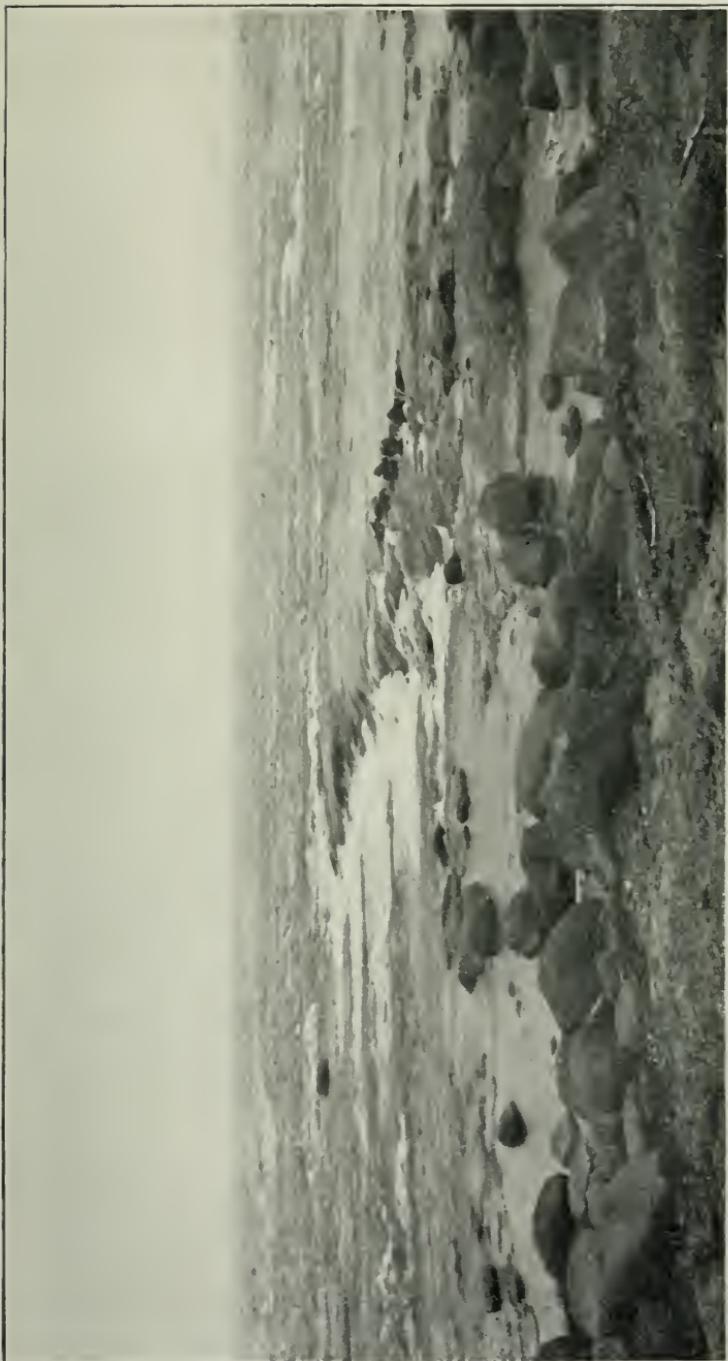
Letters and telegrams of condolence to the relatives came from far and near. The following telegraphic message shows the high estimate of the Captain prevailing amongst naval men in St. Petersburg, with some of whom he had formed close friendship. "The members of the late Hydrographic Survey of the sea route to Siberia, and myself, hear with deepest sorrow of the death of so well-loved and famous a seaman as Captain Wiggins. I shall never forget how gladly he welcomed our undertaking, the clear head and fruitful ideas he brought to our assistance, and the practical help he gave to our first steps.—General VILKITSKY, St. Petersburg."

The last days of the Captain were clouded by a rumour, which happily proved to be false, that the Russian expedition to the Yenesei was a total failure. It is true that there were several mishaps on the journey, but the majority of the ships reached their destination in safety. The original scheme as regards the number of vessels was considerably modified. Instead of ten steamers and forty barges, only seven steamers and nine barges were sent from Bergen.

Mention has been made, in earlier chapters of this book, of Mr William Byford, a London shipbroker, and the business agent as well as the life-long friend of Captain Wiggins. He shared the Captain's enthusiasm regarding the ocean route, and was ready at all time and in every way to promote the success of the Siberian enterprise.

[*To face p. 352.*

A DANGEROUS SPOT ON THE VENESSEL.





When the Captain was laid aside by his fatal illness, Mr Byford, although himself in a precarious state of health, watched over his friend's interests in London with unwearied fidelity. He supplied, as far as possible, the Captain's place at meetings of the Directors of the large Company, to which reference has been made, and exerted himself to the utmost to render the Captain's position secure. It was a singular circumstance that Mr Byford died within a week of the famous seaman's death. This slight tribute to the memory of a faithful friend and an upright man of business will not be deemed out of place here.

## CHAPTER XX

### CHARACTERISTICS AND STORIES

A many-sided personality—Example of his repartee—Not a man of mere ideals and phantasies—His practical mind—Modesty—A bad man of business—The cant of “charity beginning at home”—His love for young people—The “boy man”—His powers of story-telling—“The White Squall”—His love of animals—A Siberian dog at Victoria Station—The end of “Lady Chang”—The dogs at Sandringham—“Sailors’ Knots”—Impression created by Wiggins in Russia—Madame Novikoff’s testimony—The mainstay of his career.

ANY attempt to summarise the Captain’s traits of character, some of which have been indicated in various ways in this account of his life, must fail to portray the man as known by his intimate friends. The charm of his personality was so many-sided that, wherever he went and in whatever society he mingled, he left an impression not easily definable. The entire absence of self-consciousness, his breezy optimism, his wit and humour, his powers as a *raconteur*, his consideration for the opinions and prejudices of others, as well as his sympathy, kindness, courtesy, and chivalry, won for him hosts of

friends and admirers, each receiving impressions according to individual predilections.

Although his mind was swayed by one great idea for more than thirty years of his life, yet he never incurred the odium of being a bore. He seldom paraded his great idea, unless for business purposes, or when drawn out by friends and acquaintances. When he did refer to it in private, he spoke in such a picturesque and vivid style that his hearers were soon absorbed and fascinated. He was as much at home, and spoke with equal effect, in the drawing-rooms of the West End of London as amongst a little group of rough sailors. He was often the life and soul of dinner-parties and social assemblies. His quaint wit, shrewd observations, and smart repartee made him a favourite guest in both England and Russia, as well as in other countries which he visited. His ability as a public lecturer has been referred to already.

One example of his repartee may be cited. It was sent by Mr H. N. Sulivan to the *Daily News*, when that journal was printing examples from all quarters. Visiting Krasnoiarsk, the Captain and Mr Sulivan spent an evening with the manager of a gold-mine. "The conversation had been running upon the great pressure of business in England, and the delightful contrast afforded by Siberian life in winter. Our host blew his nose in a primitive fashion, putting his finger first on one nostril and then on the other. Seeing us watching

him, he said, through Mr Wardropper, who was interpreting for us, ‘I presume that is not your custom in England?’ ‘No,’ replied Captain Wiggins, ‘we have not time; we do both at once,’ suiting the action to the word. This so delighted the Russian that the story followed us wherever we went. When I related it to Sir Robert Morier, he remarked, ‘Talleyrand would have given fifty pounds to have said that.’”

Wiggins’ strength of character lay, to a great extent, in his stubborn will and clearly-defined convictions. Having once made up his mind—after careful deliberation — on any question of moment, nothing could shake him. At the same time, he was always grateful for advice and help in doubtful matters, or with regard to questions on which, from lack of knowledge or experience, he had not the right to be confident. It is entirely wrong to represent him as a man of mere ideals and phantasies. He had no patience with mere theories which had no definite and practical objective, or were reared on ill-founded speculation.

His Kara Sea theory seemed to him, without a doubt, to be fraught with vast practical development, and he was right. He demonstrated over and over again the soundness and absolute correctness of his theory. He took up the work which the demonstration opened out, because — as he often expressed his view—he was “convinced it ought to be done.” He proved to the world the existence of an open sea, and was ever ready to

co-operate with others who had the necessary means and enterprising spirit to encourage and pursue the work and to reap the practical results.

Modesty and an unassuming manner were mingled remarkably with the assertion of his strong convictions. It was truly said of him, in 1887, that he was "absolutely incapable of doing justice to his own achievements." He kept himself in the background, as far as it was possible to do so, and was never weary of pointing out and elaborating the work that might be done by others in developing the resources of Siberia by means of her mighty rivers and the ocean highway to Europe.

Although "every inch a sailor," and a most skilful navigator, endowed with wonderful presence of mind, and cool, clear judgment when facing difficulty and peril, yet his endowments and acquirements did not include a capacity for business, and he was quite sensible of this deficiency. The petty details of business, to which he had to attend sometimes, caused irritation, and he was always delighted—like a schoolboy let off from doing a slateful of sums—when an opportunity offered for transferring such matters of routine to others. In important matters, as well as in details, the same inability and reluctance were shown. It was a supreme pleasure to him to take a costly cargo through the great "Ice-cellars" and up the Yenesei, but a serious misfortune, in his view, if he was saddled with the responsi-

bility of selling that cargo at Yeneseisk or elsewhere.

Another source of irritation was the inability of men of business to see, as he saw, the vast possibilities involved in the development of the ocean route. When the cant of "charity beginning at home" was put forward by millionaires as an objection to investing capital, he could scarcely find words to express his indignation at their short-sighted policy.

Cautious, calculating, self-engrossed men of business had but little liking for a man of Wiggins' enthusiastic and sanguine temperament. Their cramped horizon comprehending only solid, certain, and quick profits, "fantastic" was the mildest term which they could apply to the Captain's main object—welding a bond of friendship between England and Russia by means of commerce.

There is one feature of his character which demands more than a passing allusion, because of its prominence and widespread influence. His love for young people formed not merely an incidental phase of his life, but part of its fabric. He had no family of his own, and he lavished attention and kindness on other people's children in England, Russia, Siberia, and other parts of the world. He was often called by his equals in age "the boy-man," so readily and naturally did he adapt himself to the inclinations and prepossessions of youth.

It was no uncommon event, when business

engagements permitted, to devote hours at a time in explaining to a lad the intricacies of a piece of machinery, or in helping him to model or to rig a ship, or to model some other object with which he was familiar. It was no trouble, but a pleasure, to be questioned and cross-questioned for a whole morning by an intelligent youth on some scientific, nautical, or historical subject. He had a forcible and magnetic way of imparting knowledge, and what he said was never forgotten. Always anxious for the prosperity of his young friends, he did his utmost to ensure for them a good start in life after leaving school, and many a man, now engaged in a profession or a business, retains bright and grateful recollections of what the Captain did for him. In some cases the recipients of benefits sought to make some return in after life. One of these was Carl Rosa, who, when on the ladder of fame, tried strenuously to further his old friend's interests.

Not only at home, but also abroad, was this love for young people testified, and in many a Russian and Siberian household, and even in the *chooms* and huts of native families, the "Angless Cap'n" will be long remembered with affection and gratitude.

His powers of story-telling, so strong an attraction to grown-up people, were used with striking effect amongst the young. Unfortunately, very few of his entertaining and rousing stories have been preserved, except in the memories

of hearers. His *repertoire* consisted of two classes—sea stories and animal stories. A record of one or two specimens of each class will be appreciated by men and women who sat at his feet years ago, and listened with bated breath to his tales of adventure, peril, and heroism.

The "White Squall" story was a special favourite. One glorious night—the full moon shining from an almost cloudless sky—the Captain was in the Mediterranean, with every sail set. His mind at rest, he turned into his cabin and fell asleep. His repose was soon disturbed by a dream. He thought the water was rushing over the ship's side and into his cabin—that the vessel was in danger of sinking. Still asleep, he got out of his bunk, and, with great effort, made his way to the deck. Reaching the man at the wheel, he forced him away and took his place, and then began shouting orders to the sailors. He awoke, and found the men gazing at him in consternation, fearing that he had suddenly gone mad. He himself felt awkward and foolish, for the night was still calm and glorious, and there seemed no occasion for his alarm and excited orders. He retired to his bunk again, amid the general laughter of the men.

Again he fell asleep, but soon awoke with nerves intensely strained. He was puzzled to account for his condition, and he determined to dress and go on deck. Making for the companion-way, he glanced, in passing, at the barometer.

The quicksilver was out of sight! He dashed on deck and repeated his former orders. The men were again inclined to be amused, not discerning any reason for such orders. The man at the wheel laughed. “What! dreaming again, Cap’n!” he exclaimed. But it was evident that the Master was now wide awake. The men saw he was in earnest, and began to obey his orders, though somewhat sulkily. Almost before the last sail was stowed, the squall was upon the ship in full fury. With bare masts she rode it out in safety, while vessels around, under full sail, were caught, and went to the bottom. The men, amazed and awestruck, soon gave thanks for the narrowest escape of their lives.

The Captain’s great love of animals, his influence over them, and their devotion to him formed a prolific source of entertaining stories. He studied closely the varieties and habits of Siberian dogs, and communicated the results of his observations to the *Fancier’s Gazette* in 1889. He brought home many Siberian dogs, and one specimen, a fine sledge-dog, created considerable consternation at Victoria Station, London. His master’s luggage was piled up high on a platform trolley, to which the dog was securely chained. The Captain strolled to the bookstall, and, whilst scanning the pages of a magazine, was suddenly aroused by exclamations of alarm proceeding from the vicinity of his belongings. On turning his head, he saw the dog trotting along the

platform towards him, drawing, with the utmost ease, the trolley-load of luggage, while one or two porters hung on behind attempting to stop the animal's progress. The Captain's roar of laughter quickly allayed the alarm of passengers and porters, and, speaking to the latter, he said : "It's all right ; he'll draw the luggage just where you wish it taken, and save you the trouble, if you'll only tell me where it's to go." Alarm was now changed to curiosity and admiration, and the dog was the hero of Victoria Station until the train steamed away.

About "poor Lady Chang," the Captain's favourite English mastiff, whom he took with him to the Yenesei, he had many an entertaining episode to relate. She at last suffered the penalty of resisting kindly efforts to keep the cold from her. The natives sewed her up in a reindeer's skin ; but she gnawed away the artificial coat, would persist in going out hunting, and died of tetanus, brought on by frost-bites.

The whims and oddities of the dogs accepted by King Edward, when Prince of Wales, also furnished material for amusing anecdotes. As already hinted, some of these dogs assumed a militant attitude at Sandringham, and "Bosco," through a lack of a reasonable amount of docility, missed the honour of accompanying the late Prince Albert Victor to India.

"Kara," a dog of the fox type, which the Captain picked up on the Kara River, was taken

GROUP OF SIBERIAN DOGS.



"KARA A."

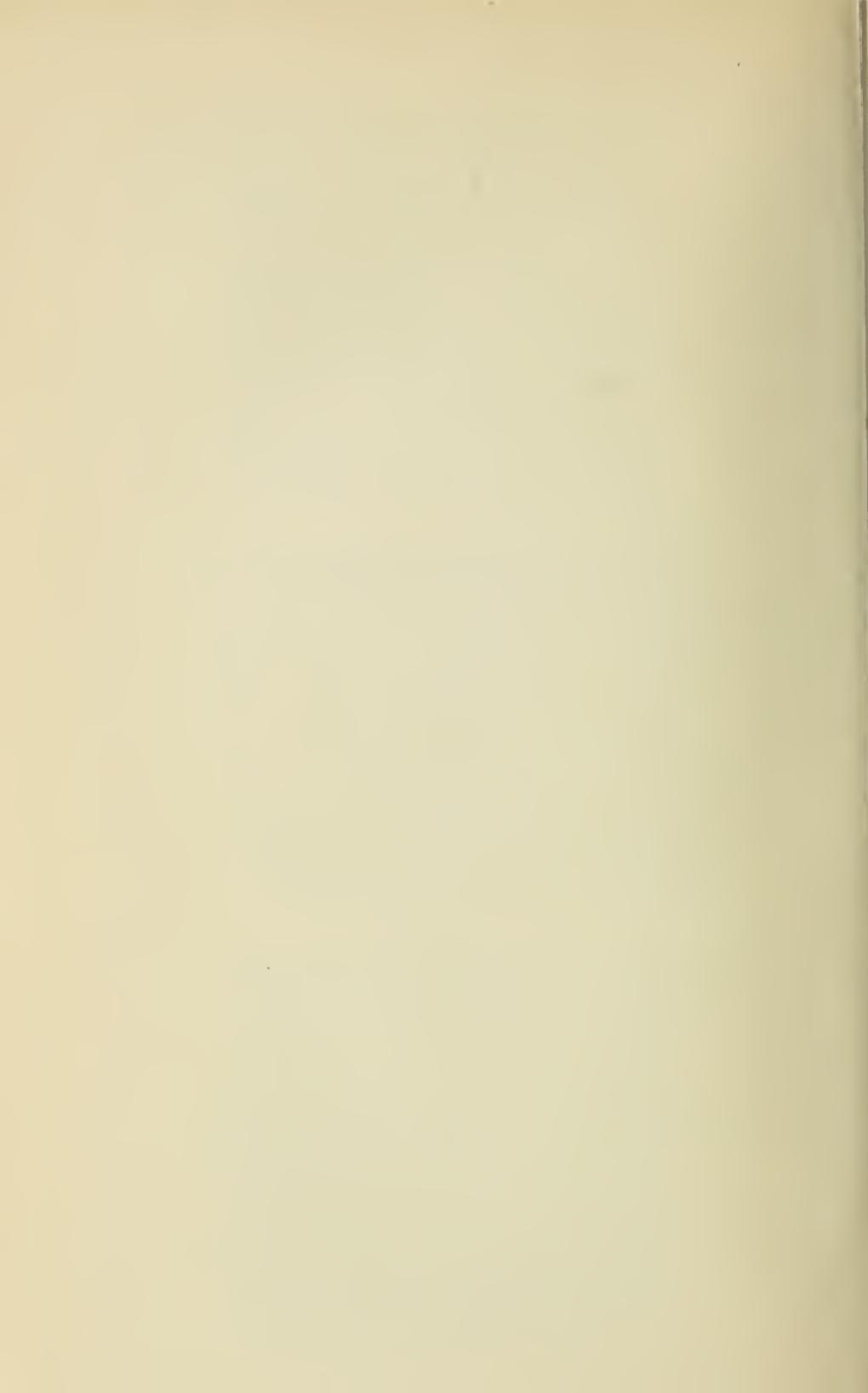
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"HECTOR."



"TROLLOP."



to Sunderland, where other dogs used to chase and hunt it, mistaking it for a common English fox, and once it had its throat torn open. "Hector," a Siberian dog of the bear type, with long white hair, also found a home in Sunderland. He was mistaken for a time for a young Polar bear, escaped from a menagerie. Sagacious and good-tempered, he caused much entertainment in the town when he condescended to draw a sledge.

Many stories might be told of other animals which the Captain brought home from foreign parts. A pig and a rooster, imported from the Mediterranean, and presented to a resident in the neighbourhood of Clapton, once placed the Captain in a somewhat awkward position, and the story, as he told it, provoked much merriment amongst his young friends. The two creatures had become so warmly attached to him that the sound of his voice, or his whistle, was sufficient to bring them to his side. One morning he incautiously whistled when setting off to the City and making his way to the omnibus. A few minutes after the 'bus had started, he looked round, and saw the pig and the rooster following at full speed. People in the road attempted to drive them back, but to no purpose. At last the Captain had to dismount, and, greatly to the amusement of the passengers, led back his dumb friends to their quarters, followed by an interested and laughing crowd.

These allusions to the "boy-man's" love for young people, and the specimens of the true stories

and anecdotes with which he captured their attention, may be brought to a close by quoting a few verses written by the Captain—and he was a capable versifier—in which he recorded a simple incident occurring in a domestic circle. He employed some leisure moments in instructing a young person in the art of making knots. Two or three months later the maiden, now a matron, received the following lines from her instructor.

“This is a true lovers’ knot,” he said,  
As he twisted over a piece of thread,  
And, carefully drawing the ends out straight,  
Presented the form of the figure eight.  
“It is, my darling, a double noose,  
Pretty to look at if left quite loose ;  
And two hearts closely we may unite  
By pulling the ends of the cord up tight.”

“And this is a bowline knot,” quoth he  
To the merry maiden upon his knee ;  
“And terrible things on the mighty ship  
Would happen, you know, if this knot should slip  
In dropping the anchor, hoisting a sail,  
Or making safe from a fearful gale.  
So the bowline knot, you will understand,  
Should never be made by a careless hand.”

“And this is a weaver’s knot, my dear—  
An intricate puzzle to you, I fear.  
But you’ll find you’ll often have need for it  
When the children’s stockings you learn to knit.  
Oh, what confusion, and loss beside,  
If a knot in the warp were left untied !  
Hither and thither would stitches run,  
And the weaver’s weaving be soon undone.”

"In tying a knot, if you tie it wrong,  
You cannot depend on it very long ;  
But if made, as it should be, firm and fast,  
It will hold and tighten and always last.  
Now which of these knots do you like the best ?"  
Said he. And the maiden whom he addressed,  
Like a woman answered, and queried too—  
"I like the true lovers' knot—don't you ?"

The impression created by Wiggins in Russia was different, in some respects, from that made in this country. The hold which he obtained on the esteem and admiration of members of the Imperial family, of members of the Government, commercial men, and naval officers was remarkable. His co-operation in any enterprise or expedition was regarded as a sure guarantee of success. The Russians trusted Wiggins as they have trusted few modern Englishmen. The influence which he obtained was entirely inexplicable to many English merchants and speculators. In fact, they were unable to realise that the words and acts of a humble British seaman should carry so much weight. To quote again, on this subject, a passage in a letter from Sir Robert Morier—whose position in St. Petersburg gave him every facility for learning the true state of feeling regarding his friend : "‘Joseph Wiggins’ is an historical character, and your name, and not your title, will everywhere command respect, admiration, and attention."

Madame Olga Novikoff—a lady so well qualified to express an opinion on the subject—in a

letter to the present writer, speaks in highly eulogistic terms of the man and his work, emphatically asserting that Wiggins must ever hold prominent rank amongst the world's great men. This keen observer and accomplished critic of Anglo-Russian affairs adds her testimony as a personal friend, and alludes to the prevailing feeling in Russia. "As a Russian, I can never think of Captain Wiggins without sincere admiration. My countrymen never speak of him without the greatest esteem and gratitude."

The mainstay of Joseph Wiggins' career was his high principle, directed and governed by deep religious feeling. His reputation for conscientious and upright dealing remained unblemished to the end. His Christian faith was unostentatious, but it permeated his whole life and conduct. It was the conviction that his Siberian work was ordained by God which inspired the pluck and dogged perseverance distinguishing his labours from first to last.

Like most pioneers, he was not destined to reap the fruit of his heroic toil. He died a poor man, but left a name rich with some of the best honours that spring from prolonged striving to accomplish a great and beneficent purpose, prompted by the highest motives, and pursued with unquenchable courage and zeal.

## CHAPTER XXI

### SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Summary of results—Tests made by Russia of the sea-passage—Siberian exports and imports—A new view of the “Land of Exile”—Public Companies—Reasons for cessation of traffic—Expenses of Kara Sea expeditions—Remission of Customs’ dues necessary—Privileges granted to Wiggins—Present attitude of the Russian Government—Hostility of Russian manufacturers—The feeling in Siberia—*Entrepôts*—Mr Henry Cooke’s Report—Revolution in prices—Limitations of the Trans-Siberian Railway traffic—Increase of population—Emigration—Proposed railway from Odborsk to the Yugor Straits—Russia’s opportunity—The successes of Wiggins not “a run of luck”—The policy of patience—Estimate of Wiggins’ work.

THE prolonged effort of Captain Wiggins is regarded in some quarters as a failure. This notion is grounded on the fact that a regular working of the ocean route has never yet been established. But if the actual results and the prospective results of his efforts are fully and fairly considered, another and more favourable conclusion must be drawn. Success, and not failure, must be written over the brave pioneer’s work.

"Even in this bad world, an honest endeavour to carry out a noble object bears fruit." Such was the word of encouragement offered to Wiggins by Sir Robert Morier, when the former, smarting under the disappointment of 1888, expressed a strong desire to abandon the prosecution of the Siberian enterprise. But a great deal happened after 1888 to advance the objects in view, and if Sir Robert's life had been prolonged to 1905, he would certainly have congratulated his friend that his scheme was within measurable distance of accomplishment.

Between those dates the Russian Government had made its own test of the correctness of Wiggins' assertions. It had ordered ships—built in Britain for the Russian Navy—to be taken to Siberia by the ocean-route, which task was satisfactorily carried out. It had ordered a large quantity of railway material to be conveyed to Siberia by the same route. More significant still was its organisation of an expedition for surveying the mouths of the rivers and the Kara Sea coasts, which was materially assisted by the observations and charts supplied by Wiggins. The expedition of 1905, for the relief of the starving peasantry of Siberia, seemed to the Captain, in his last days, that Russia intended to give the ocean route all the support in her power, that she was bent on proving the route to be—quoting again the words of M. de Witte—"a great Yes."

As regards imports arriving in Siberia from

Europe—about 20,000 tons of merchandise, on a rough reckoning, had been conveyed through the Kara Sea to the rivers. A considerable portion of this tonnage consisted of gold-mining machinery—much needed in the country—which gave a new impetus to mining industry, and was carried to its destination at about half the cost of overland transit.

Many of the vessels which brought this merchandise returned to Europe laden with the produce of Siberia, and these sample cargoes, together with the reports of Wiggins on the inexhaustible riches of the vast territory, awakened in English merchants, as well as in merchants of other countries, a keen desire to open trade by the new sea-route.

When Wiggins began his work, the majority of Englishmen were in ignorance of the natural wealth of the Czar's dominions beyond the Urals. Indeed, Siberia was to them nothing better than a desolate, frost-bound land of exile and horror. The correction of this notion may be attributed in a large degree to the labours of Wiggins, and the information which he made public.

When the Captain began his work there was not a single English Company for trading with Siberia in existence. Several Companies have been formed in recent years, representing a capital of at least £1,000,000, and this movement also springs, in a great measure, from the interest excited by Wiggins in the “Land of Exile.” It

is true that, up to the present time, not much has been done by some of these enterprises, which relied on facilities presented by the ocean route; but one Company alone, with a large capital, and with valuable concessions from the Russian Government, is ready to convey plant and machinery to the banks of the Yenesei, capable of cutting and preparing for the English market 100,000 trees every year. The area over which the chief concession extends is about 800,000 square miles of dense forest, many of the trees being four to five feet in diameter, and over 200 feet high.

We now come to the reasons for the cessation—which can be only temporary—of traffic by the ocean route. The failure in 1899 of several ships to cross the Kara Sea—an expedition with which Wiggins had nothing to do—can be regarded only as an incident, acting prejudicially, for the time being, to the repute of the water-way to Siberia. The conveyance of goods through the Kara Sea to the great rivers is a very different matter from conveying cargoes to New York or Bombay. The difference ought to be obvious to every one, but, in the face of various criticisms, it is evidently not so.

Many unusual expenses have to be incurred. To provide against possible obstruction from ice, every ship, or one ship of every expedition, must be properly fitted as an Arctic vessel, with metal sheathing and a ram. There is also the cost of

transhipment from ocean steamers to smaller craft at the mouths of the rivers. Another heavy item of expense is the high rate of insurance.

How are special expenses such as these to be met? If they come out of the pockets of the shippers, in the way of additional freightage, they must then be added, as a consequence, to the selling price of the merchandise. This raising of prices would probably render the goods unsaleable in Siberia, and the British merchant would naturally withdraw from such an unsatisfactory enterprise.

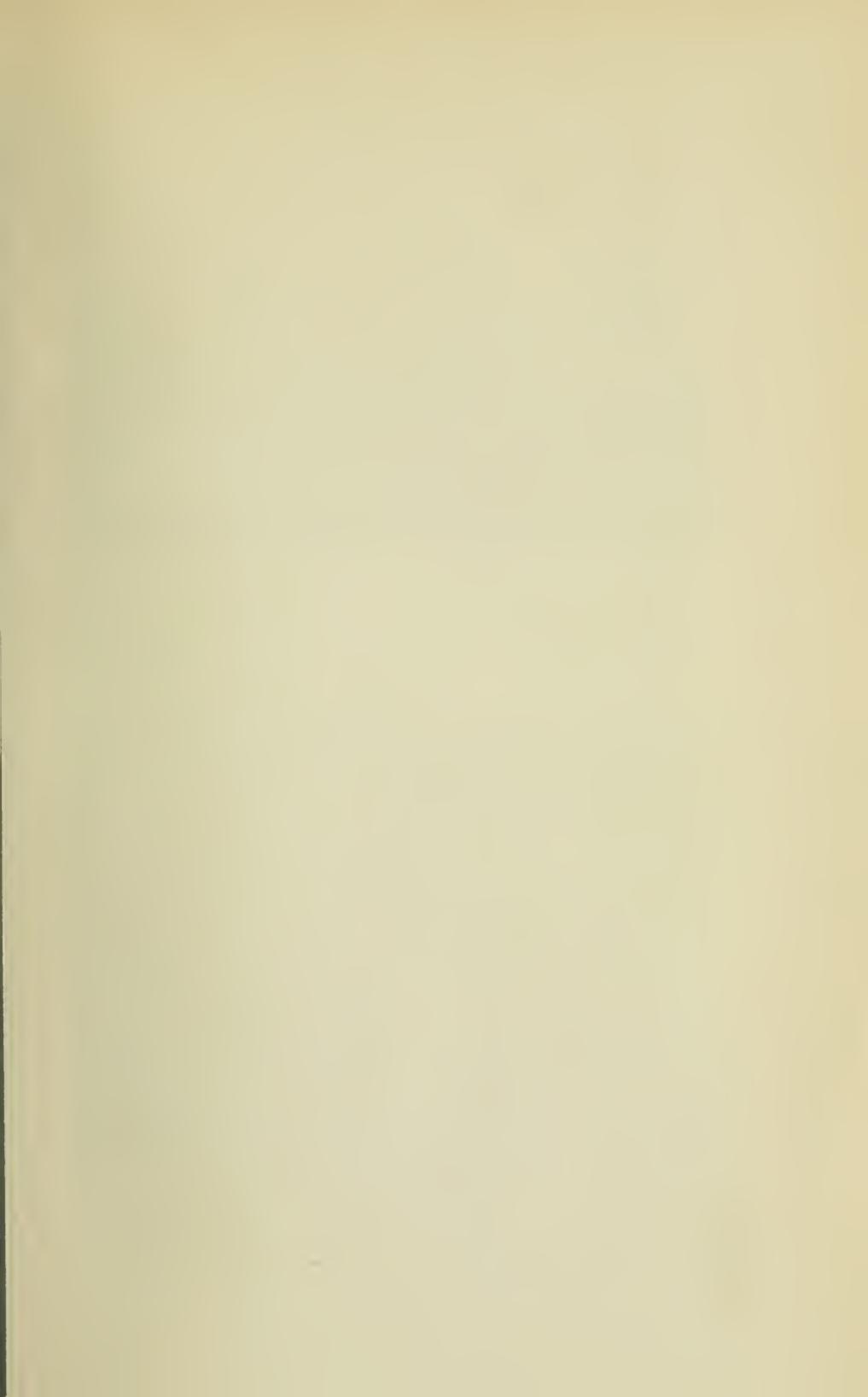
The only way to counterbalance these expenses is by obtaining the remission or the reduction of Customs dues at Siberian ports. There is nothing unreasonable in looking to the Russian Government to make such concessions. The benefits arising from commerce by the sea route are mutual, as affecting England and Russia, but would probably predominate on the side of Russia. Moreover, the beneficent effect of a large development of commerce must be kept in view, as Wiggins himself never wearied of reminding us, namely, the formation of such strong ties of friendship between two great nations that an outbreak of war would be rendered almost impossible.

During the years in which Captain Wiggins conducted commercial expeditions to the Yenesei and the Obi, the Russian Government allowed British goods to be imported either free of duty or at considerably reduced rates. Soon after his

retirement these concessions were withdrawn. In 1905-1906 exemptions were again granted to certain merchants for the importation of certain specified classes of merchandise. An announcement appeared a few days after Wiggins' death that Yeneseisk would be declared a free port; but it was made free only in the above very limited sense, and for the years mentioned. At the present time no exemptions are in force, although urgent applications have been made recently to the Government to grant the right of importation free of duty for a term of years.

The attitude of the Government on this question springs entirely from the opposition of a number of Moscow and other Russian manufacturers and merchants to the granting of privileges to goods carried by the Kara Sea route. Protected by high tariffs, they make exorbitant profits out of their Siberian trade, and any exemptions for sea-borne goods would inevitably imperil their interests. The whole of Siberia, excepting two or three merchants, is strongly in favour of granting Customs' facilities, and yet the Government, in deference to the narrow and selfish views of wealthy monopolists, declines to entertain any application on the subject.

The obstacle, therefore, which prevents the accomplishment of Wiggins' great project is to be found in the short - sighted policy of these influential persons. But it is most improbable that the closure of the sea route can continue for any





SIBERIAN VILLAGE.



PALACE OF ARCHBISHOP, IRKUTSK.

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length of time. Siberia earnestly desires the resumption of traffic, and the Russian Government, desirous for the development, even by foreigners, of the resources of the country, cannot maintain an attitude so obviously opposed to its best interests, to please the prejudices of a coterie of millionaires.

It is true that money must be spent to assist trade and the exchange of cargoes. Wiggins advocated the erection of large *entrepôts* at the mouths of the rivers, consisting of warehouses and wharves, where ocean steamers could unload and reload without loss of time, leaving the goods brought from England to be carried up the rivers by steamers of light draught. An alternative scheme of his was the erection of a large *entrepôt* at the Yugor Straits, which would enable one English vessel to make two voyages in a summer season, and also provide against delay in the event of the Straits being blocked with ice from an unusually long winter. In other directions also money could be usefully expended, such as in dredging the rivers, placing buoys, beacons, or other signals, and in starting a telegraph service.

Mr Henry Cooke, Special Commissioner of the Commercial Intelligence Committee of the Board of Trade, and formerly British Vice-Consul at Archangel, draws attention, in his exhaustive "Report on the Condition and Prospects of British Trade in Siberia," to the disappointment prevailing in Siberia at the cessation of sea-trade expeditions. "On all

sides—at Tiumen, Tobolsk, Tomsk, and Krasnoiarsk—I heard unfeigned regret expressed at the failure (in 1899) of the hopes raised by the previous successful Anglo-Siberian direct sea-trade expeditions *via* the Kara Sea and the mouths of the Obi and Yenesei. Longing glances are still cast back to the results then achieved and the promises awakened, both in the import of foreign goods and in the facilities for export of Siberian raw material, not yet practicable by rail. British goods were then obtainable at prices now altogether out of the question. . . .

“A special committee (at Tomsk), appointed to consider the needs of the Siberian trade, as well as the Tomsk Bourse Committee, have declared in favour of the former Customs facilities; but the more powerful influence of Moscow manufacturers and dealers, and of a few big Siberian monopolists, prevailed, and local convenience and prosperity had to yield. This was perhaps natural, for the new route was working a revolution in prices, British stearine candles, for instance, being sold at from 8 roubles 50 copecks to 9 roubles the poud (36 lbs.), while a great Kazan manufactory, in whose hands the Siberian trade in that article was monopolised, sold them for 17 roubles the poud.”

The influence of Russian manufacturers is so powerful that, even if the sea route had been opened by Russian enterprise, Mr Cooke doubts whether the Government would have relaxed its attitude on the question of duties. “But so great,” he

adds, "is the desire in Siberia for direct sea communication, that there is no saying what enterprise might accomplish, even without the former Customs facilities."

The Trans-Siberian Railway cannot meet the demands of the whole of Siberia, one reason being the long distances between the line and some of the agricultural, timber, and mining regions. For instance, the cost of conveying, or rafting, a quantity of timber 1,000 miles up the Yenesei to the nearest railway station (Krasnoiarsk), the freightage to Europe, together with the cost of its transport across the sea to England, would render British enterprise in the Yenesei forests entirely prohibitive. Moreover, the great railway will have as much as it can do in carrying mails, passengers, and a variety of goods, to and from nearly six hundred stations, without attracting the produce of the vast territory to the north of its track. The Kara Sea is the natural outlet, as Captain Wiggins often insisted, for the produce of Northern and Central Siberia, as well as the natural inlet for exports from England.

The rapidly increasing population of Siberia should form another weighty argument with the Russian Government for granting Customs privileges. Mr Cooke gives interesting particulars on this subject. The population has increased in fifty years by about 4,000,000. In 1858 it was 3,430,930. In 1900 it was 7,894,258, and at the present time it is probably between 8,000,000 and 9,000,000. Emigration from Russia is responsible

to a large extent for this increase. The tide of emigration began with the abolition of serfdom in 1863. Statistics on the subject for the following thirty years are not available; but between 1893 and 1903 the number of immigrants settling in Siberia, to cultivate land allotted by the Government, was upwards of 1,540,000. Mr Cooke states that the territory adjoining the railway is now occupied, and immigrants are being conducted to the forest regions of the North. These settlers require implements, machinery, seeds, a market for the produce of their labours, as well as occasional food-supplies. Such needs can be met more easily and economically by means of the ocean route than by overland transit.

There has been a talk for some years about constructing a short railway, about 250 miles long, from Obdorsk, on the Obi, to the Yugor Straits. The passage of the Kara Sea, in order to reach the Obi, would be avoided by this short cut. The estimated cost of the railway is about £1,500,000. It is extremely improbable that the scheme will ever be carried out, particularly as the railway could be utilised for about only three months in the year. There was also a scheme for making a canal, to connect the river Yurubei, running into the Baidarata Gulf, with the Gulf of the Obi. By this means the journey to the river Obi would be shortened by about 900 miles.

But costly railways and canals are unnecessary for rendering the sea route a permanent success.

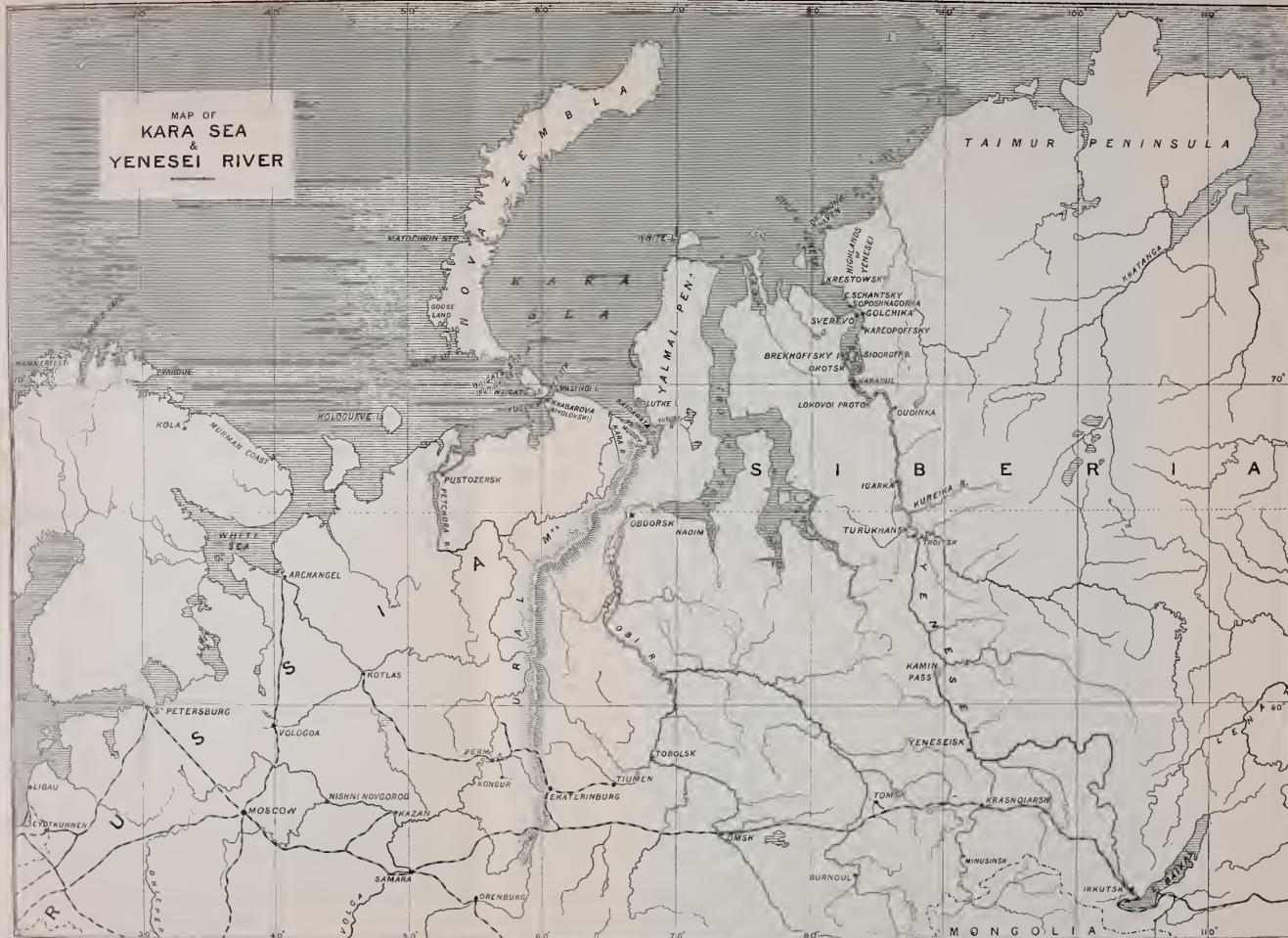
If Russia will take up the question with vigour and determination, and spend a few thousand pounds in erecting wharves and warehouses, and in other ways contribute to the safe, effective, and profitable working of the enterprise, she would make an investment tending to the lasting and increasing benefit of her Empire, and, at the same time, place the crown of completion upon the self-denying efforts of the British mariner, who devoted the best part of his life to opening a commercial highway through the Arctic seas. If Russia will undertake this work, a hundred ships, just as well as one, might make the voyage to the rivers or to the Yugor Straits in a single season.

The hydrographical survey carried out by the Russian Government, between 1894 and 1904, had valuable results. Colonel J. de Schokalsky—President of the Section of Physical Geography of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society—viewing these results, made the authoritative statement in the *Geographical Journal* that “there is now nothing to hinder this northern navigation.” The contingency of ice-obstruction need not be regarded as a serious drawback to permanent success. That an open channel can be found for six weeks or two months in the year has been demonstrated scores of times, and it must be remembered that Captain Wiggins never had to turn back, in his commercial expeditions, on account of ice. He encountered ice again and again, but by

the exercise of skill and patience he found a way to port. It would be absurd to say that his successes were attributable to merely "a run of luck." It was probably patience, as much as skill, that worked for success. If ice blocked the way at the "Iron Gates," or at the Yugor Straits, and his vessel was not powerful enough to make "a dash for the enemy," he quietly waited until the warm currents and a favourable wind shifted the obstruction, and opened a channel before him. Surely there are British mariners to-day, with qualifications equal to those possessed by Wiggins, and who would not disdain to adopt his methods, capable of conducting ships with costly cargoes to and from the waters of the Yenesei.

Enough has been said to show that Wiggins' prolonged effort—far from deserving the discredit of failure—must be counted amongst the most successful maritime ventures, of a private nature, of modern times. It remains for Russia to render the permanent re-opening of the sea route worth the consideration of English merchants and capitalists. Let that be done, and ships in abundance will soon sail to and fro "between this land and that," helping, by the growth of commerce, "to weave the web of concord between the nations."

MAP OF  
KARA SEA  
&  
YENESEI RIVER



LONDON : JOHN MURRAY.



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